



Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 21

Prologue

On the largest continent currently identified, there were five independent nations. The Kingdom, The Empire, The Duchy, The Theocracy and the Land of Demons. And it was in the Empire that the following took place.

With a rush of wind, the ornate sword drew a trajectory like a blooming flower.

In a garden with a luxurious pavilion at its centre, a young lady with a long red ponytail danced with her sword, twisting and turning in the shape of a rose.

The daughter of the Marquis Regnard, whose territory lies in the eastern part of the empire, Lumiliana is a strong girl of 17 years, who serves as a knight directly under the Imperial Princess, a rare honour for a woman.

Due to those strong-willed red eyes that have kept many a man at bay, she possesses a strange atmosphere of both resolute strength and youthful naivety.

“Milady, I have brought you some refreshment.”

“Mm. Thank you.”

Taking the cup of water the maid had brought in on a tray, Lumiliana drank it with one gulp.

As the icy cold water spread through her body that had become overheated during her exercise, she sheathed the enchanted sword that was a family heirloom and wiped the sweat off her brow with a towel.

“Where is Her Highness now?”

“She is currently reading in the library. When I brought her tea not long ago, she still had several dozen documents left so she may be some time.”

“Okay. I understand.”

The Empire is currently in tumult. Seven years ago the Crown Prince, the Emperor’s oldest son, inherited the throne at the age of twenty-three, and ever since then oppressive tax measures that exploit the common people have gradually increased.

The rumoured cause is the wife to the current Emperor, the daughter of the Duke of Earlgrey. She lived a life of decadent luxury, during the day she received gifts of jewellery and foreign dresses and at night she organized extravagant balls and parties. The tyrannical tax policy is thought to be what is paying for this.

For the sake of reversing the dwindling fortunes of the Empire the Imperial Princess, sister to the emperor and Lumiliana’s master and close friend of the same age, was currently in the territory of Regnard to gather allies for a planned rebellion to overthrow her brother.

In order to save the people who were suffering in these hard times, the Princess didn’t mind if the Imperial House she belonged to completely fell from power in the process of the revolt.

In order to protect such a noble and just lord, Lumiliana would risk life and limb. With that determination burning inside her, the young lady swordswoman who had a long cherished dream of becoming a knight trained as much as time would allow.

“Come to think of it, milady, did you hear of it? The story of the adventurer who is currently active in the Kingdom.”

"An adventurer?"

Lumiliana raised one of her well-shaped eyebrows.

She had heard stories of the 'White Haired Demon' who had been the bane of nobles in the old days, and of course, everyone knew the rumours about the 'Golden Witch' who founded the Adventurers Guild.

Unlike most Imperial aristocracy, she didn't think of the White-Haired Demon as such. Rather, she thought of him as more of a hero, who ended the nobility dominated system that had brutally oppressed the underclasses.

However, she can't say the same for the Golden Witch. Although she's never met the woman directly, the stories about that witch using powerful sorcery and financial strength to cause all sorts of trouble were infamous the continent over.

What's more, it's not wrong to say that witch also created the concept of adventurers. Just outside of the borders of the empire at the frontier of a foreign country there exist numerous adventurer guilds, but Lumiliana can only think of them as meeting grounds for armed scoundrels who wouldn't lift a finger for anyone without money.

Uncouth and greedy, these unorthodox warriors could never reach the level of a true and chivalrous knight. Although she understood the demand for their services having participated in various monster exterminations herself, every encounter she has had with adventurers was thoroughly unpleasant, so she decided that she would never rely on their assistance.

"Of the three dragon kings that attacked the Kingdom, apparently the head of one of them was taken by a lone adventurer in single combat."

"What did you say!?"

The Dragon Kings are the most powerful type of dragon that she knows of, with only eight existing in the world. Of the three of them that attacked the Kingdom from different directions, two of them were repulsed by the adventurers guild, and according to this story, the third was felled by one adventurer alone.

To slay a dragon is an incredibly meritorious deed for adventurer and knight

alike. Lumiliana couldn't hide her astonishment that there was an adventurer who could defeat a dragon king alone.

"I believe... 'Demonic White Sword', or something to that effect, was the name of the white-haired woman who defeated that dragon."

"'Princess of the Sword', you say?" (**SEE TL NOTE**)

A large misunderstanding seems to have occurred.

What Lumiliana is referring to is the title granted to the winner of an annual martial tournament held in the capital to determine the female knight granted the honour of directly serving the Imperial Princess, the 'Princess of the Sword'.

Although she's not quite sure it's proper for a noblewoman to call herself a princess, she nevertheless takes great pride in the term.

For an adventurer woman to copy the title she loved so much, and to accomplish such great deeds with it, she was a little indignant.

"But still, for such an amazing swordswoman to never have been heard of before in the empire, isn't it strange?."

"It can't be helped. She's an adventurer, after all."

The reputation of adventurers is something that is spread from one adventurer to another. Since there are very few adventurers in the empire, naturally news of their deeds travels very slowly.

Inevitably the exploits of S-rank adventurers will make the rounds, but the swordswoman in question still remains in B-rank without having been promoted.

"From the rumours, it seems that she has a stunningly beautiful appearance, and has both blue and red eyes."

The same eyes as the White-Haired Demon. Lumiliana found herself becoming even more interested in the story being told by her longtime maidservant.

The strongest swordswoman in the Kingdom against the strongest swordswoman in the Empire... Even if she was just an adventurer, Lumiliana was excited by the prospect of such a match.

"Hey... Is there really such a beautiful woman with white hair and odd eyes in the Kingdom...?"

"Your Highness?"

With a quivering voice, there stood her master, those stunning blue eyes wide open and her long blonde hair swaying in the breeze.

"By any chance, is that person's name..."

—

Changing our setting to the Imperial Capital, in a luxurious villa that was built on separate grounds to the Imperial Palace, a woman approaching her thirties with pinky blonde hair sipped from her teacup in a foul mood.

It was the true princess of the current Emperor, Empress Alice Ragdoll. Originally the second daughter of the prestigious Duke of Earlgrey, eleven years ago this woman married the Prince after having her older sister dragged out of court and imprisoned.

Her real face that could once be described as lovely had aged like milk as she grew older, and she battled the inevitable tide by applying copious amounts of makeup.

"Why do things have to be this way... Everything else... Everything else is going so well!"

Alice slammed her teacup back onto the saucer with a clatter.

Through immense effort, she had taken the hand of her beloved emperor and become part of the Imperial family. Besides her husband, there are many women who devote themselves to her, and she has the backing of her still-powerful family.

But, what was the one thing that could threaten to strip away all of her prestige?

"A child... If I only had a child, my position would be rock solid...!"

A congenital disease that has left her infertile. In the eyes of the Emperor who must have an heir, it was a glaring flaw.

Although the Emperor still loves Alice, those manipulative nobles whisper in his ear that being married to a barren 29-year-old woman could leave the empire in future jeopardy, and advise him to divorce her to marry a concubine.

Even her idiot sister-in-law is trying to have Alice removed from the Imperial family on those grounds.

As a matter of fact, many of the people who were on her side eleven years ago when she had her older sister removed from court were beginning to gravitate towards the Imperial Princess' faction.

Between the Emperor and the Imperial Princess, she wonders who really has more allies.

"What's wrong, Alice? Why do you raise your voice like that?"

"Albert-sama..."

It was Albert Ragdoll, Alice's husband and the current Emperor, who had called out to his wife in that worried tone.

Despite being older than Alice, who had already begun to develop wrinkles, perhaps it is the privilege of being royalty that has let Albert keep his dandy charm even at his age.

"To tell the truth, I... There are many who doubt my suitability to be your Empress if I cannot produce for you an heir... If things continue like this, I wonder if it would not be better for me to stand down before causing Albert-sama any more inconvenience..."

"Oh, my poor sweet Alice. Worry not, if there are such knaves who seek to disparage you, I shall remove them."

Becoming a much more meek and modest man as he aged, Albert gently hugged his wife to comfort her.

Although, in some ways, her husband hasn't changed at all. His constant feeling of needing to protect any damsel who sheds crocodile tears in front of him, he truly is an easy man to handle.

By keeping the people who have issues with their marriage at bay like this, without noticing that his power base is slowly crumbling, the Emperor and

Empress could ignore the political world and focus on their love.

As evening eventually came, Albert spoke gently to Alice who lay on the bed beside him.

"Alice, you needn't worry about children."

"Eh?"

"I was researching the recent case where the Kingdom was attacked by dragons, and incidentally learned that, surprisingly, Shirley seems to still be alive."

When he spoke that name she hadn't heard in a long time, her consciousness that up until that point had been boiling in frustration suddenly froze over.

Her hateful older sister who had fallen from grace suffered unbearable torture and ended up in a twisted and hideous form. Although the jailor spun some bald-faced lie about how all her wounds had miraculously healed, Alice assumed she had simply died in a ditch somewhere after breaking out of jail, but apparently, she yet lived on in the Kingdom.

"I did some more digging, and apparently she now has two ten-year-old twin daughters."

"Ten years old... You don't mean to say..."

"Ah. If you consider the timeline, it seems I'm highly likely to be the father."

A black haze stirred in Alice's heart.

Even though she can't bear a child, she still lives a joyful life alongside her Emperor, and now that older sister who had always looked down on her apparently gave birth to Albert's children and wants to smash her hard-won happiness to pieces.

As his wife's eyes boiled with jealous rage directed towards that older sister who has the one thing she couldn't, Albert spoke completely unaware of her feelings.

"So what I was thinking... What if I arranged to bring a daughter back here to be my heir to the throne, then you wouldn't have to worry about providing a successor yourself?"

—

“And so? Is the cleanup of the conflict with the dragon kings complete, hm~?

In yet another place, this time the clerical room of the Kingdom’s royal castle. A member of the demon family with two black horns and blonde hair flowing down to her feet, Canary who operated under the moniker of the ‘Golden Witch’ sat down in a chair with a malicious smile on her face, as she watched the King struggle with the stack of papers on his desk.

“Ahh... The post-battle assessments that Canary so demanded were both reports of victory, unnecessary confusion and chaos were suppressed as much as was possible. ...Every once in a while, I wish you wouldn’t push such mundane work on to me.”

“Is that not the prerogative of the king? Are kings and nobles not merely the stagehands behind the drama that is the nation?”

The man with jet-black hair in the prime of his life managed to maintain his dignity as he smiled wryly at her. He is Edward Pendragon, the current King.

Popularly known as the ‘Black Lion King’ Kings throughout the generations have been well acquainted with the Golden Witch, a long time ally of the Kingdom.

“That reminds me, some of the soldiers in units I sent out to investigate the battlefield returned with reports of an adventurer who single-handedly slew a dragon king, is there really such a woman known as the ‘Demonic White Sword’?”

“As luck would have it, yours truly is an acquaintance of hers.”

“Oh? When I inquired about her background, what I heard made me doubt my ears.”

This wise king still remembered it vividly... The night where he attended a ball in the Empire and exchanged words with that person.

White hair that would be lost amongst the snow, and a face so beautiful he doubted whether it was truly of this world. The woman’s eyes had sparkled red and blue like precious gemstones as she stood arm in arm with her fiancée,

beaming with happiness.

Edward who loved his own wife dearly could understand just how earnest the feelings of that girl were, so he was incredibly saddened when he had heard about what happened to her as a result of the Prince's unjust actions, but now he hears that she is living happily with her two daughters despite being in the rough profession of an adventurer.

As both a king, and a person, it made him truly happy.

"Canary, about the commemoration ceremony for the adventurers who took part in the battle against the dragon kings, how many have expressed interest in participating?"

"Ah, you should look at this."

Canary handed him a list of the adventurers who had fought against the dragons who approached from three angles.

Edward looked down the list, noting whose names were crossed out and whose were not, and raised an eyebrow.

"Much fewer than I thought... Not even ten people? Should I take this as my lacking prestige?"

"Adventurers are people who abhor such formalities. Rather, the ones that expressed interest might be regarded as queer by the rest of the guild, hm~?"

"For the sake of the country, I still must repay them in some way... And Canary, you've already taken away the easy answer of money with your reward. What shall I do?"

"Why not throw a feast? That would be far more suitable than receiving some trinket or a medal in a ceremony."

The king seriously considered the suggestion of Canary, who laughed heartily. Though as he glanced at the list again and noticed that the name of the person who had piqued his interest before was crossed out, Edward sighed.

"She really won't come, will she? My wife had been hoping to meet her again for the longest time... Dragon slaying aside, any country would love to have such a talented person in their employ. I simply must have her attend, is there

anything I can do?"

"Well, it's impossible."

The witch grinned.

"When I inquired if she'd like to attend your little ceremony, she refused saying that 'I'm going to be teaching my daughters how to bake cookies that day.' I think you may suffer through some unpleasantries if you tried to force her to come along, don't you?"

TL Note:

About the whole misunderstanding

剣鬼 = Kenki = Demonic Sword/Demon Swordsman/etc

剣姫 = Kenhime (Read as Kenki) = Sword Princess/Princess of the Sword/etc

Basically just pretend it makes sense, ok. I spent so long thinking of a way to make it work in english and it just would not happen.

Oh boy, I think I can see where this is going.

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Who is that Happiness For?

And so, the three-pronged invasion of the Kingdom was defeated by the adventurers who intercepted them, in what would later be known as the Dragon War.

There weren't any civilian casualties, but there were injuries and deaths amongst the adventurers who fought. After the stories spread of them driving away the armies of minions, expelling two dragon kings back to their nests and killing the third, the people's trust in the Adventurer's Guild grew.

And, even more than the S-rank adventurers who had participated in the other battles, the name of the swordswoman who had defeated the dragon king by herself echoed across the world.

White hair and pale skin like snow. Differing blue and red eyes framed by a gorgeous face. The pride of the Adventurer's Guild and the Dragon King Slayer, 'The Demonic White Sword', Shirley.

With beautiful swordplay that enchanted onlookers as it cut its way through the threads of life, she was an existence beyond human comprehension...

“Lisa! Chelsea too! Good morning!”

“Hey~”

“Morning... Fuwa~n...”

“Tio, isn’t it dangerous to sleepwalk?”

“Mira... Give me a piggyback to class... Oop.”

“Eeh!? Wa... You’re heavy...!?”

With the same white hair and skin as Shirley, the twins who looked almost identical apart from their eye colours didn’t notice that from the building behind them... They were being watched.

That gaze continued to linger on them. At Sophie, whose blue eyes inherited her mother’s sharpness, and who wore her hair in a braid that hung down her front. And at Tio, whose sleepy red eyes were very different to her mother and sister’s, and who wore a single hairpin in her hair.

Even though that person is utterly enamoured with the off-to-school everyday appearance of her flesh and blood, Shirley isn’t just hiding behind the building as she watches them, she’s completely obstructed by it.

However, despite that, the figure of her daughters was firmly captured in her eye.

Having restored her broken body through an amalgamation of body and soul, she gained both a semi-immortal body and a unique skill that goes along with that. In her case, it was her all-seeing eyes that could even let her watch her daughters through solid walls.

Those people who work normal jobs would typically have to be going to work by now, but the Sword Demon has a day off. In order to recover from the fatigue built up constantly adventuring every day, she will indulge herself today.

The image of the white-haired woman staring intently at a wall and moving her head in time with the movements of her daughters is very strange, but perhaps very strange is the term that suits Shirley best a lot of the time.

“Can I help you with something?”

Shirley talks to the person standing behind her, without taking her eyes off her daughters for even a second.

“...No, I was just wondering what you were doing.”

“Ah... Yumina, is it? I felt that someone had been looking at me strangely for some time now.”

It was the guild receptionist, Yumina, whose flaxen hair was tied behind her who stood behind Shirley.

“And so? What exactly are you doing? Because from this angle, you look incredibly suspicious?”

“...”

Shirley can't find the words to refute her right away. She has an astonished look on her face at the accusation, although if you think about it objectively her actions are unquestionably suspicious.

“...I was just watching over my daughters.”

“...To me, it just seems like you're staring at a wall.”

“I'm using my power.”

“That is the most wasteful way of using that power in the world. So, you're going to spend your day off stalking your daughters using supernatural powers?”

How dare you... Is what Shirley wants to say. No matter what it looks like to anyone else, she only has pure intentions of watching over her girls.

It's quite upsetting to have that referred to as stalking.

“Do you always spend your days off doing this?”

“No, since I always adjust my own days off to my daughters' days off, I never have to do this...”

The mind of the Demonic White Sword is filled with anxiety. Ever since what her daughters spoke about at the breakfast table some time ago.

“There are several pests that seem to be buzzing around those two... So, I'm keeping my eyes peeled, in case they want to strike when the teachers' eyes

won't be watching them."



“Pests... They’re just girls and boys of the same age talking to each other, isn’t that a little harsh...?”

“No, it’s too early.”

Shirley declared with a slam.

Young girls and young boys should mix like oil and water. Outside the realm of aristocracy and their political marriages, ten years old is far too young for a girl to be mingling with boys even if it’s purely a healthy friendship, that’s the conviction of this mother.

“Well, since in the eyes of anyone else you’re just staring at a wall, you’re probably not breaking any anti-stalking laws... But, please refrain from suspicious behaviour from now on, okay? The guild’s reputation might be at stake.”

“It’s fine. I don’t intend to see through the walls of the school. If you still doubt me, I’ll go to the church later and give testimony under the《Sense Lie》magic.”

The amount of people she would have to look through aside, she has no intention of looking into a private building.

The perspective she is currently looking through renders the entire building completely transparent.

Yumina sighed and told Shirley that her behaviour was still a problem, even if they used the lie detecting magic. Her name will definitely go down in history as an adventurer who accomplished great feats, but she’s not interested in that kind of pride at all, she’s just a fiercely doting parent. Is it really such a hard ask for her to at least behave like the ‘pride of the guild’?

“Well, alright. To tell you the truth, there was something that came up that I needed to tell you about.”

“What is it?”

“Actually, there’s a C-Rank party that intends to hunt Man-Eating Ogres tomorrow, and they were hoping that Shirley-san would join them as a party

leader."

"To take on a monster that B-Ranks would have trouble with as a C-Rank... Why would they do something so drastic?"

Since the Dragon War, Shirley's relationship with the adventurers has changed a little bit.

Up till now, Shirley has always completed requests alone, and was known as a solo expert. Even now, she still undertakes most of her jobs alone but did make it public that she would accept party requests and also wouldn't demand a larger share of the pay.

No one really knows why she changed the way she did, but from time to time she will accept those parties that request her help.

And now Shirley's perception amongst the adventurers has changed to a person who exists to help young adventurer parties who try to challenge monsters far above their level whilst also still distributing the pay evenly.

"It seems that the branch chief is even being pressured by the military now to raise Shirley-san to an A or S-rank. Well, I can argue against the chief mercilessly, since I know his little secret."

"I don't want to be an A-rank or S-rank, those emergency obligations would be troublesome."

As Shirley gives a dissatisfied little sniff, Yumina smiled bitterly.

(That being said, Shirley-san, you're definitely the only B-rank adventurer out there with a nickname.)

The higher the rank of the adventurer, the more requests they specifically receive to join parties. With very few exceptions, this applies to A-rank adventurers and above.

And usually, only the S-ranks above that will ever get the honour of having a publicly known nickname. Of course, amongst the B-ranks of the guild, the Demonic White Sword is the only one with a pseudonym like that.

"So, that was what I wanted to ask, what do you think? Shirley-san's reward from a four-person party would round up to this."

Yumina held out a request contract, and Shirley looked at the simple calculation done to estimate her reward.

"Sighting of Man-Eating Ogres on the Road to the Capital... Although there are so many soldiers, do they really have to rely on adventurers for every little thing?"

"That's just how it is? I think the Kingdom is the only place where this happens."

In the Kingdom where the adventurer industry thrives, the army and adventurer guild cleanly divide their duties when it comes to handling opponents, outside of emergencies like the dragon king.

The adventurers are tasked with dealing with outlaws such as bandits, thieves, and necromancers that set up their lairs far from prying eyes, whilst obviously also dealing with monsters. The soldiers in the garrisons... Well, for the typical royal soldier... They mostly focused on keeping public order in the cities and manning the borders.

Whilst it's the adventurers' job to defeat monsters in underdeveloped or unexplored areas, it's up to the soldiery to crackdown on crime and keeps military threats from other countries at bay.

It's because of this that, when the Dragon War was in full swing, no one really brought up the possibility of using the Royal Army.

If instead of guarding and keeping order amongst the civilians evacuating the cities and towns, those soldiers fought alongside adventurers who they sometimes regarded as prideful show-offs, could the adventurers really fight with absolute confidence in the person guarding their back?

(Not that the Royal Army soldiers are weak, though.)

The reason why the exploits of adventurers are well known is that monster problems are widespread, so it's quite possible to make a name for yourself through exterminating them.

On the other hand, the deeds of the Kingdom's soldiers aren't well known, because they don't fight monsters outside of emergencies and their other activities are kept confidential.

In terms of experience and individual strength, adventurers would probably win a small scale battle. But, the soldiers of the Kingdom trained hard every day to prepare for potential emergencies, conducting drills in large-scale battle formations as well.

The point is, they serve different demands. Whether it's monsters or people, adventurers and soldiers simply face different opponents.

"Nevertheless, the relationship between the two parties is about as good as it can get, I suppose that's thanks to Canary?"

"Hrmmm... It's hard to believe it from the way she usually acts though."

Even though it seems unfitting for that self-indulgent and mischievous person, Canary has worked hard to reconcile the differences between the Adventurer's Guild and the Royal Army ever since she founded the guild.

Part of it was the agreement to leave unclaimed treasure from monster nests and dungeons to be returned to the royal treasury, another is the close relationship she has shared with successive members of the royal family for a thousand years.

"Anyways, it's fine. That request, I'll do it."

"Are you sure? Having been divided up this much, the reward is fairly small."

"It's not a problem. My pockets have been pretty full ever since the incident with the dragon, and if we use Rangitz we can wrap up the request quickly."

So long as it's close enough that she can get there and back within a day using the Dragon Wagon, Shirley doesn't mind accepting party invitations.

Her feeling is that she wants to stop that so-called 'lonely adventurer work.'

Those two daughters who were growing up to be so kind and loving, when they finally grew old enough she didn't want them to worry about leaving behind a lonely mother to take their own paths in the world.

If that happened, it's possible that they'd miss out on finding their own happiness by staying behind to comfort her. She doesn't want that. As a mother, she wants those children to only think about their own futures and be happy.

(I can't be negligent, I have to show my daughters just how 'happy' their mother can be.)

If she managed to find some friends, Sophie and Tio would be able to live a fulfilling life without having to worry about her.

Personally, she doesn't consider herself as a someone who is really suitable for being both the insurance policy for and experienced backbone of low ranking adventurer parties, but relationships have to start somewhere, and lately there has been a lot of demand for veteran adventurers to teach the colourful variety of rookies coming through the guild.

"Anyways, I'll go to the guild tomorrow and meet up with this party."

"Y-yes! Thank you very much!"

Although that stern gaze and cold face haven't changed much, the Demonic White Sword was doing her best to gradually build relationships with adventurers from the guild.

Even if her motivation is of course completely based around her daughters... It's still a positive change.

"If that's over with, I'll return to watching over my girls."

"...I'd really prefer if you didn't."

She's normally such a cool and capable adventurer. As Yumina thought so, she couldn't say anything in the awkward silence that followed.

I might be a bit busy over the next couple of weeks so I don't think I can keep up daily chapters. Fingers crossed though.

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 23

The Future of those Daughters

The general maintenance of weapons with enhancements added through sorcery, commonly known as magic weapons, requires expert knowledge and skill.

If it's just removing the hilt of a sword in order to wash out the blood, then it can be done by an ordinary adventurer. But, to immaculately sharpen weapons and not even leave a single bend or nick in the blade, that is best left to a blacksmith.

Moreover, the numbers of blacksmiths who actually have the necessary experience in working with the precious metals and magical spells to properly maintain a magical weapon are very low, so people come to rely on the dwarves.

"You said that the maintenance on my swords was finished... So, where are they?"

"Oh, jus' take it."

The dwarf that bluntly answered Shirley's question had a magnificent beard

that covered his entire chest... Dimros, without taking his eyes off the sword in his hands, nodded his head towards the red and blue straight swords.

They come from a time immemorial. The two pillars of the nation that supported a tyrant's rule in the age of the gods, these swords that protected this frontier town from the wrath of the dragon king were dug up from the original site of that country's capital, and their brilliant jewel-like gleam was completely unlike steel.

The protector of the nation《Blue Citadel of the Country Ig-Alima》and the symbol of the nation's authority 《Red Fortress of the Faith Sul-Sagana》. Shirley gave the two blades with those inscriptions running along them a light swing, then returned them to the toolbox satisfied.

"Jeez, bringing in such troublesome magical weapons... How'dya expect me to get any other work done today, eh?"

"I'm paying you, so isn't it fine?"

"That's not ta' point! Do ya have any idea how hard that was ta' do!?"

If you're aiming to become a master blacksmith, knowledge of magic is an essential skill. Lately, magical weapons with the magic quality of 'never breaking in battle' have become very common and if such a weapon does eventually need to be maintained, a blacksmith needs the skill re-enchant the blade again after re-assembling it.

However, that's only true for magical weapons with simple effects, when it comes to those rare weapons with multiple effects it is an incredibly delicate job to not adversely tamper with the existing enchantments during sharpening or modifications.

As it stands, maintaining truly top-tier magical weapons is a very difficult process, and takes a lot of time accordingly.

Thanks to Dimros and the other master smiths creating all these weapons, the amount of maintenance they need to do has only increased.

A weapon, once used, will require careful maintenance to keep in working order. That applies to all weapons, even a magical sword with an unbreakable quality.

It doesn't matter if it can't 'break', if one doesn't have maintenance done on their sword and it suffers some sort of defect in battle, it won't be a laughing matter.

During the Dragon War, adventurers had flooded all the blacksmiths, buying weapons and placing requests for maintenance work. Only the toughest craftsman such as Dimros were still on their feet, the rest of them were rocking back and forth in their bedrooms covered in a blanket.

"Dont'cha worry about me, though if ya have me slavin' away on weapons forged from Orichalcum and Flame Steel that are already nigh indestructible, then 'ya want me ta' put even stronger anti-breaking enchantments on 'em, you're givin' me a lot o' work."

Usually, magical weapons would be made from mithril, a rare but lightweight metal that is conducive to magical power... But, there are ores even rarer than mithril that exist in this world, and those are the ones used to create swords that pass down through the ages in legend and song.

Whilst still retaining their strength, these mythic metals are extremely malleable. Like the Flame Steel that is able to absorb formless energy, weapons and armour made from materials like these contain special properties that go far beyond what one can expect from mithril or steel. It takes an incredibly gifted craftsman to maintain such equipment, not to mention smith them.

Therefore, it was inevitable that Dimros is the only blacksmith in this frontier town skilled enough to take care of both Ig-Alima and Sul-Sagana.

"It's worth the effort. There's nothing wrong with wanting to make sure my weapons won't break no matter what, right?"

"Yeah, yeah, I know. But ya' should still take care of 'em better. Usin' the same weapons to fight against'a dragon for a full day, no matter how good they are, they'll eventually snap 'ya know?"

It's enchantment magic, not some sort of miracle. What's more, some enemies have the power to break enchantments.

If a monster with that power also happened to be intelligent, it would be a big problem. The dragon king known as Beowulf that Shirley fought had already lost

his mind, but that was an exception to the rule, if she had come up against one of the other Dragon Kings it's possible that the adventurers accompanying her could have suffered far worse casualties.

(I really do still have a long way to go.)

From now on instead of just focusing cutting down the calamity, Shirley reflects seriously on trying to avoid damaging those two blades in the process.

"By the way... What are you doing here, Tio?"

"...I was found out."

Whilst scratching a cobweb out of her dust-specked hair, one of her beloved daughters emerged from the shadows of the store and Shirley came close to sighing.

Although it may seem like it with Sophie and Tio being so close as sisters, they're not actually attached at the hip all the time.

When Tio goes out on her own like this, Shirley knows (by watching from a distance) that she often visits places that adventurers tend to frequent, something that leaves her conflicted.

"I don't really think there's much for you here and even if there was, I don't think I've given you enough pocket money to buy anything from this place?"

The items displayed along the walls and on shelves are mostly common for adventurers, but they are expensive items for common people. Tio didn't seem to mind that, though.

"Mm... Looking is free, though."

"Whilst that's true... If you just want to go window shopping, why not look at some of the shops selling accessories?"

"?"

Tio tilted her head to the side. Apparently, she doesn't have any interest in accessories like other girls her age.

Instead, she's more interested in the dark and dusty shop run by a boorish blacksmith. Maybe if she was a teenage boy she wouldn't mind it too much, but

she can't help but be worried about her ten-year-old girl visiting a place like this.

(If you said you wanted to be an adventurer, what would I do...?)

She's been even more curious ever since Shirley defeated the dragon king, but was it a good or bad thing that Tio was so interested in adventurers?

Adventurer work is difficult and perilous. Many should count themselves lucky to retire young because of an injury, Shirley knows all too well that many meet far worse fates.

That kind of danger is something Tio should know full well living alongside her sister and Shirley in that inn full of adventurers, listening to their stories with those eyes of hers lit up bright, but yet she still sees something in it that makes her want to follow down that path?

...She's still deeply concerned about it, but in recent years it's not something Shirley can deny anymore.

"Besides, I'm not the only one who's interested."

"Wha-!?"

"Oh? Mama and Tio?"

An intuition that had been cultivated through many battles. That mother's daughter sensor had immediately detected the presence of her daughter and she swung around to look, just as Sophie casually walked into the blacksmith's shop.

"Sophie... Even you?"

"Mm. Recently she's been really interested in magic wands and stuff."

"Wait, Tio...!? That was supposed to be a secret!?"

"But, we've already been found out."

And thus, another daughter had arrived. Even the honour student Sophie seems to be deeply interested in adventurers nowadays, maybe it's inevitable that she'd share interests with her twin she's with so often?

Just like Tio, Sophie also grew up immersed in the stories of adventurers,

though she instead loved reading about them in her picture books. Therefore, even though Sophie has a bit more of a fashionable air about her, she still has a strangely idealized view of the rough and tumble Adventurer's Guild.

In reality, the Adventurer's Guild is full of scoundrels and ruffians, but Shirley is worried her daughter might lump her in with them by association if she told them about it, so she could never say anything.

"Listen here, you two. I'll tell you this right now; Being an adventurer isn't some easy profession that you can jump into so simply, and just what exactly is so good about all these adventurers you're so interested in any way?"

Still, it's a mother's duty to remonstrate with her daughters. Even if they hate her for it, she would sooner give them a stern warning now and deal with that than see them hurt or killed.

"Yeah... I know what you mean, mama."

But, the daughters she loves so much seem to accept her reasoning.

"I mean, those adventurers in the inn just get drunk and fight each other over everything."

"One of them tried to start dancing with all his clothes off at the feast before, and got beaten up by a female adventurer."

"Ah..."

That unfriendly Shirley had never introduced her daughters to the adventurers at the inn, but for better or worse they seemed to have left an impression all the same.

Drinking and quarrelling completely out in the open, no matter if they were men or women it was easy to see them like deadbeat fathers.

(More importantly, I'll have to make sure to find and have some **words** with the pervert who took his clothes off in front of my daughters.)

Shirley seriously noted it down in her mind.

"And I've never seen it, but I understand that being an adventurer is dangerous."

"Then, why? You should think of working in the city instead where it's much safer."

As their mother looked down on the two from above, Sophie and Tio looked back at her earnestly.

"But..."

"...Mm."

Even though it's a slightly embarrassing and difficult thing to say, they answer her.

"When I asked the adventurers, they said that the world outside was so beautiful... I think that if I could see something like that with mama, I'd be really happy."

"Uu..."

The sound leaked out of her mouth unintentionally. The oasis that with a spring that sparkles like a jewel in the sandy desert of the far southwest, the ruined city that hangs in the heavens only connected to the earth by a single huge length of vine, the magnificent temples constructed from crystals and gems by ancient priests in the time of the gods... If her daughters told her that they wanted to explore the mysteries of the past and climb to the stars together with her... She feels a bit faint on her feet.

"Besides that... I want to become strong and cool like mum is."

"Uuu...!"

Once again, it leaked out. There isn't a single parent in the world who would be unhappy to be praised by their child. And if it's a silly doting parent like her, even more so.

Shirley tried not to let it show on her face, but her heart is torn between keeping her daughters safe and letting them choose their own future. Ah... As that conflict swirled inside her, she held a hand over her blushing face and sighed.

"...Honestly, I am against you becoming adventurers. This world isn't so sweet that you can just wish for happy things like that and they'll come true."

"But..." Shirley continued

"Once you two have celebrated your coming of age... If you can prove to me that you're ready, I will support you with everything that I have."

Shirley conceded to her daughters' dreams, with conditions. If they want to jump into such a dangerous profession, they have to scale the wall that their mother will prepare for them – at this, Sophie and Tio's faces lit up.

"Really!? You're sure!?"

"Just... Just remember, you haven't passed yet. So don't do anything unreasonable like trying to fight monsters until you are adults."

"...Then, what can we do to pass?"

"Please think about that on your own. That itself is one of the challenges."

Knowledge is power. If they can prove to Shirley that they can become adventurers who will always put their own safety first, then as a mother she might just be able to accept it.

"However, from now on I forbid you to enter the blacksmith's shop without me with you."

" "Ehh..." "

"You won't get me to budge on this. What would happen if a weapon fell and you got hurt?"

Sophie and Tio are still children. There are certain places where she has to be absolutely firm for their own good.

"Then, since mum is here, can I still have a look around?"

"If you're heading off for a job then we'll just leave..."

"...No, it's fine, I've already finished my business for the day."

As soon as she said it, both of her girls picked up a weapon. No matter what she might say those two are still an adventurer's daughters, so it almost seems natural that they'd frolic and play amongst the weapons and armour as if they were in a toy store, but when she thinks about those girls' wishes coming true she doesn't feel quite as conflicted as she did before.

Watching Sophie and Tio having fun with the weapons and imagining their future together, she suddenly remembered Canary's words.

———Learn to enjoy your adventures, girl.

A private family adventure, just between mother and daughters, that definitely seems like something truly enjoyable.

The next generation of adventurers, not even Shirley's eyes can see what the future truly has in store for her two daughters... That being the case, for their sake, Shirley will be the first obstacle in their way.

Whether or not they could overcome the Demonic White Sword and achieve their dreams, time would tell.

I adjust Dimros' accent to make him sound sillier everytime he shows up.

\`f •¤•?／

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 24

Curse Rebound – Execution

In the Imperial Capital lies the Imperial Palace, the home of the Imperial family and the seat of national power. It was in such a place that Emperor Albert met with a man whose entire body bar his face and hands were covered in a robe typically worn by magicians.

“Then, are the magical preparations complete?”

“Yes. There were no issues. Using this magic, the Crown Princesses may be delivered to His Imperial Majesty at any time.”

The man who stood in the centre of the magical sigil was in the employ of the Imperial family... In other words, the Imperial court magician.

Acquiescing to all of the Emperor’s demands whilst retaining an air of respectability amongst the nobles of the court... In other words, a lackey who takes care of the dirty work behind the scenes.

“Proceeding this way, there will be no need for His Imperial Majesty to have to travel himself, not to mention it may be difficult to gain entry to the Kingdom.”

"Yes, quite right. In other words, this magic shall send the subjects to a designated point, correct?"



“Exactly.”

Although he hardly thinks that’s the way to talk about a blood related daughter, the court magician realizes that saying something would only draw the Emperor’s ire, so he bit his tongue and nodded an affirmative.

The Empire and the Kingdom had been on speaking terms during the reign of the previous Emperor, but when Albert ascended to the throne and his tyranny began things changed. At the continental conference held once every four years, where every nation other than the Land of Demons participates, Albert made several ill-advised remarks on his first attendance as Emperor and increased tensions between the two nations.

“After all, compared to our nation, they are such an insignificant little place.”

Words spoken about the Kingdom, the conference’s hosts.

Although he didn’t intend for anyone to hear his mutterings, his words didn’t escape the ears of the ‘Black Lion King’.

The talks ended in a sour mood not long after that, with trade relations between the two countries suddenly worsening hugely, becoming fraught with protectionism and tariffs.

That said, detection magic that can cover an entire country has not yet been developed on this continent and there just isn’t enough manpower in the different countries able to be dedicated to finding people who have come illegally from abroad, so it has been very hard to actually enforce border control laws.

In fact, it isn’t unusual for someone seeking refuge from another country simply end up becoming residents there.

“I have men on standby ready to retrieve my daughter. After you’ve cast your sorcery, they shall retrieve them from the collection point.”

“Once I cast the magic, there is none but me who can interfere with it. There are some rumours about that adventurer defeating a dragon king, but those stories only come from those base adventurers themselves... It’s nothing but

nonsense. How can you cut such high and noble magic with a mere sword?"

"Very true. However, the task you undertake will bring two heirs to the throne back to the Empire. I trust there won't be any mistakes?"

As the Emperor looked down on him, the court magician rubbed his nose and said, of course, there wouldn't be any. After all, how could such imbeciles fighting with primitive weaponry hope to do anything against his arcane knowledge?

The Imperial court magician who looked down not just on adventurers but also the nearby soldiers for that reason, chuckled to himself as he remembered the reward the Prince had promised him.

When that mother tries to take her children back, he will simply ensnare her with magic and make her his own.

According to the rumours, that woman had looks that were almost otherworldly, the thought of making such a peerless beauty a slave set his heart racing.

"I shall now begin. ———《Remote·Supplement》"

The sigil beneath him shines as he chants. The devil's hand looms darkly over the peaceful lives of that family.

—

In that remote town, the training square of the local adventurer's guild is busy again today.

Usually, the only voices that can be heard are the yells and cries of mock battle, but today cheers can be heard blended into the din.

Even the adventurers practising with bows and slings turn to look at the training scene taking place, in the centre of the training square ringed by a crowd of adventurers a young brown haired magical knight with a mace and shield faces off against a white-haired swordswoman wielding a wooden sword.

"Well then, if you would."

"Y-yes!"

The young man couldn't stop sweating as Shirley stood perfectly composed in front of him———Kyle, wielding the equipment he had bought with his reward from the Dragon War, slowly approached Shirley with his shield raised.

In reality, Kyle doesn't really have the skill to judge when his opponent is leaving themselves open. What's more, it's obvious to him that the moment he attacks, he will receive a completely decisive riposte.

Even if it's training and he'd likely be allowed to make the first attack, as a teenage boy he's still worried about embarrassing himself in front of this many people.

(Well, I know I don't want to look silly, but I think she's the same.)

He doesn't take his eyes off Shirley, but he knows that Sophie and Tio are also watching the practice.

Although her daughters had always been popular at the inn they stayed in, they had become a sensation with the whole guild after the feast and Kyle can sympathize with the mother who wants to restore a bit of her dignity.

(But... I'll still take you on——— !)

Aware of the excitement of the adventurers watching their mock battle, he closed the distance between himself and Shirley until she was in range, then shifted his weight using the muscles in his right foot.

“Hiyaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!”

He leapt and swung the mace down on her with his right hand. Even though it was just a mock battle, he put all his strength and peed into that blow... But, like a river stream diverted by a rock, his blow missed Shirley by a few centimetres.

“H-huh!?”

He kept swinging the mace, but Shirley's light footsteps made him feel like he was trying to hit a leaf dancing in the wind.

“.....”

“Uwoah!?”

After she casually knocked aside his mace with her wooden sword, Kyle barely

defended against her counter with his shield.

Shirley's body is said to be able to move at a speed that is unthinkable for a normal human being and although Kyle has barely been able to keep up so far... She slowly increases the tempo.

"Wa... Ugh, aaah....! W-woah!"

Even if her blows are gentle, the sword that's flashing in front of Kyle's eyes is moving so fast that it looks like there's two of them.

Now that he's relying on pure instinct to stay in the fight instead of tactics or skill, it's obvious that he's beginning to get overwhelmed... But, even through his panic, he notices something.

(Is that... a gap?)

In the briefest of moments between her strikes, her side is vulnerable. Could this possibly be his chance, if he swung the mace right now?

Thinking about that, Kyle tensed his muscled, but then for some reason, he hesitated. The sudden hesitation proved costly and with a sigh, Shirley swept Kyle's legs out from under him.

"UWAH!?"

"Really, you're just..."

She held the wooden sword to the neck of the rookie adventurer on the ground. "Oooooh...!" a short cheer went up from the adventurers watching.

"Even though I gave you such an opening, why did you hesitate like that?"

"That's... That's because, uh... Wait, you did it on purpose!?"

During duels between people, there are many techniques where one can feign an opening and manipulate an opponent's attacks.

It seems that Kyle didn't get caught in Shirley's trap because of his hesitation, but for the purposes of this training battle, it was still a failure.

"Although adventurers will sometimes fight against humans, the overwhelming majority of enemies you face will be monsters. Since monsters are fundamentally different to us, duelling skills don't matter at all. You need to

focus on just reading the opponent's moves and delivering a blow when they leave a gap like that."

Between people, a glancing hit can lead to death... But even if you pierce a monster's chest sometimes its heart may be in another place, monsters aren't just abnormal in regards to their physical strength.

The ideal is a single killing blow. If a fight becomes prolonged your opponent will only gain more and more of an advantage, one shouldn't overlook an opportunity to attack.

"I was wondering ever since your first attack, but were you hesitating to attack another person even though it's just a mock battle? If you do something like that on the battlefield, you'll be the first one to die, Kyle."

"No, that's not it... The thing is... Um..."

"?"

I don't want to hurt you... Is the feeling that welled up in his chest.

It's possible that's what he was thinking back during the battle, maybe he was even holding back.

Of course, he doesn't have the grounds to say such a cool thing as he's lying flat on his back. If anything, given the difference in ability, she should be the one saying that.

As Kyle daydreamed of being able to actually say something like that... Shirley tilted her head in confusion.

"Anyways... Duelling is all about reading your opponent. If you come across a bandit or a heretic mage and act like that, you wouldn't defeat them even if you had a thousand attempts. ...Asterios, how is it going on your side?"

"Hm... There are still many things to worry about."

The silver tag of an A-rank hung around the neck of the minotaur adventurer as Asterios rested his battle-axe on his shoulder, looking at the two young adventurers who were gasping in exhaustion in front of him.

"The goddess has blessed us with a bright and beautiful day, but seems to have left the future of these two children in darkness."

As if praying for a similarly bright future for those children, Asterios rose his hands in supplication. If it wasn't obvious by the robes he was wearing, one could definitely identify him as a priest by the bell he wore around his neck, engraved with the symbol of the goddess.

"T-this is impossible...! What can I even do as an archer if all my arrows disappear...!?"

"Is this part of the training...? We've got to stop him before he chants."

"It's a practical form of training. If they need to chant to use such simple magic, then you must move to interrupt them."

Facing off against this godly adventurer was the half-elf whose height made her indistinguishable from a hobbit, with maroon coloured hair and bright golden eyes, she was the magical bow archer called Leia.

The other one was a youth with black hair and black eyes, a rare combination in this part of the world, wearing little armour along with a toolbelt and wielding a dagger, this was the scout called Cudd.

"Anyways...! If you don't go out and take the fight to him, I can't do anything from the back you know...!"

"Shaddup...! I'm not used to being on the front line either! Don't be so damn demanding...!"

"Oh, despite how you look you still have the strength to argue? Then, let's continue the training."

"We will start up again as well. Now, please get back to your feet."

"Y-yees!"

As Leia and Cudd's training resumed despite both of them gasping for air, Kyle and Shirley squared off again.

Ever since the Dragon War, there have been a lot more chances for Shirley to train and adventure with the rookie training party she had accompanied to defeat the Ancient Dragon, and recently Shirley has been getting involved regularly at the training square.

She also became interested in applying as a trainer for the training facility

meant to open here next year, Shirley was worried that it would eat up too much of the time she would rather spend with her daughters.

“Let’s end it here for today.”

“If you’re too sore to get out of bed tomorrow, don’t force yourself on an adventure.”

Shirley and Asterios, who hadn’t broken a sweat during the entire training session, turned their backs on the three rookie adventurers sprawled out on the ground. Even in spite of the bronze tag hanging around his neck, with all those moans and groans he’s making Kyle might be misidentified as a zombie again.

“Oh, mama!”

“Finished?”

“Yes, just now. I hope that wasn’t too boring?”

After finishing her business with the guild, Shirley gently pets the heads of Sophie and Tio who had run over to her.

“Mm. It was fun to watch.”

“Is that so?”

“Then, we should go home now! We’re having stew today, right?”

“You don’t need to hurry so much, I still need to buy the ingredien—”

At that time, only Shirley could see the black mist descending on the peaceful scene.

It ignored all the other adventurers and moved to swallow Sophie and Tio in its darkness-----

“...Tch.”

It’s instantly cut and dispersed like a cloud.

Wielding a sword summoned using imagination alchemy, the Demonic White Sword had cut through the essence of the magic and then instantly had the sword disappear. There wasn’t anyone nearby whose eyes were good enough to notice those three lightning fast movements.

“Mama? What’s wrong?”

“...No, it’s nothing.”

Shirley couldn’t help but let it show on her face.

The black mist just now was a magic that Shirley only saw because of her ability to see ‘everything’.

She doesn’t know what kind of spell or curse it was, the only thing that matters is that it was definitely aiming for Sophie and Tio.

(Who would dare...!?)

Shirley suddenly felt that long-suppressed hatred bubbling up to the surface for the first time since her daughters were born.

‘The Demonic White Sword’, it was time for her to truly earn that ominous name.

—

Meanwhile, in the Imperial Palace. Blood painted the walls of the court magician’s study.

“GY.....

GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGH!?!?!”

“O-oi!? What’s wrong!?”

The court magician’s torso had been sliced in half and blood sprayed like a fountain as he toppled over dead, meanwhile Albert could only collapse to the floor and back away by dragging his rear end on the ground.

“It... It failed...? Argh, utterly useless!”

Albert threw insults at the dead man. Although calling it a failure is right in a sense, it misses what really happened.

Since ancient times, when curses have been identified by skilled magicians they have been able to be nullified, but the true horror lies in the fact that these curses can also be rebounded to their caster in this way.

Sometimes the effect is only as bad as losing consciousness, but when the magic is especially strong it can reduce the rebound target to a pile of flesh.

However, for a curse rebound to produce a clean slash like that... It was unheard of.

"My word, what a colossal waste of time this was. Next time I'll have to hire a much more powerful mage."

Not noticing the abnormality, Albert leaves to prepare for his next attempt.

He didn't notice it at all. The slash that had cut the court magician in half had been delivered by a swordswoman whose swordplay existed outside of the laws of nature.

He had looked down on her. To him, all that business he'd heard about with the dragon were just exaggerated rumours.

And he was too foolish to even know what he had truly done now.

—Oh leader of the nation, why have you poked the bear?

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 25

The Demonic White Sword's Request

“I’m going to be taking some time off.”

“Eh? What’s happened all of a sudden?”

As soon as the training was over, Shirley had suddenly come up to the desk to tell Yumina this, at which the receptionist was a bit lost for words.

For most adventurers, they are free to accept requests at their leisure so they can decide on whatever vacation time they like. This doesn’t apply to those A-Rank and above adventurers who have to respond to emergency requests, but since Shirley is only B-Rank her saying she’s taking a break is just a formality.

But, having known her for five years, Yumina knows that Shirley wouldn’t take time off just on a whim.

“Is there a daughter-related event again?”

“No, not particularly.”

“Then, more stalking?”

“What exactly do you see me as?”

As much as she wanted to say ‘a doting parent’, Yumina held her words when she saw that Shirley seemed more on edge than usual.

“Actually, there is one issue... I need to take some time to conclude whether it was coincidence or something more. For now, I can’t tell anyone but you. My hands are tied until I have conclusive evidence.”

That black haze from earlier... Shirley recalled that ominous magic with a bitter expression.

It had almost seemed to ignore the other adventurers and made straight for Sophie and Tio, although she had scattered it completely using her unique skill and swordsmanship it still remained a threat.

As a swordswoman Shirley has only really dabbled in magic, she doesn’t know any real techniques to protect people from spells and curses. If that magic returned again when she was away, there would be nothing she could do to protect her daughters.

As she thought that, she whispered into Yumina’s ear.

“To tell you the truth, there was some kind of magic that almost harmed my daughters just now. I don’t know whether it was a spell that was aimed at them or was meant for someone else in the guild, in the best case scenario the caster simply got the wrong target.”

“...Miss Shirley, do you think your daughters were specifically targeted?”

“I’m going to investigate it but... Honestly, I hope I’m wrong.”

She can’t know for sure if her daughters really were the true target, but Shirley isn’t going to leave such a dangerous thing up in the air.

If, in fact, that spell had been aimed at Sophie and Tio specifically, then she would have to return the favour ten-fold to whoever had dared to cast it.

...Actually, that caster had already retrieved his comeuppance, but that’s not something Shirley is aware of.

“If it’s just my own paranoia, then I’d be glad. But just in case my fears are real, I’d like to ask the guild for help in anti-magical interference measures.”

“I understand. So, how long are you going to need?”

"I'm not sure yet, but I don't think I'll be gone longer than a week. If something like this happens again, I'll be putting in a request."

After that, when she was leaving with Tio and Sophie to return to the Deficit House, a sigh escaped from her lips.

She's beginning to get really tired of all these troublesome things trying to interfere with her family life, but as a mother it's her duty to eliminate any threats to her daughters as soon as possible.

(So long as they just went after the wrong target by mistake... Then everything will be fine.)

Shirley fully believes that her beloved daughters would never do anything to cause someone to want to do them harm.

However, what if the motivation isn't something so petty like that. A sudden thought makes her blood run cold and her muscles tense up, what if the caster is some pervert after her girls?

(Let's just hope that I'm worried about nothing.)

Unfortunately, the goddess of this world is not the type to grant the wishes of man.

The mother's earnest wish did not come true, as two days later the black mist once again attacked the twins.

After Shirley had intercepted and cut down the mist once more, similarly slaying its caster unbeknownst to her, she gave Sophie and Tio two magical resistance accessories from her toolbox.

"Mum, what's wrong?"

"I'm sorry, you two. For today, please don't leave the house or take those off. I will explain everything later."

After Shirley told them so, she quickly went to the adventurer's guild.

"I didn't think a day would come where I'd have to make a request for an adventurer myself."

Until now she had always tried to solve every problem that came her way

with her own two hands, but she was kidding herself if she thought life was that simple.

It was in this way that Shirley, with a look of self-derision on her face, swallowed her pride and handed a written guild request to Yumina.

“Request to Identify the Magic Targeting my Daughters... This request is suitable for magicians familiar with multiple sorceries and curses, and if possible also those capable of investigating the caster themselves.”

“Is this enough for a reward?”

The bulging cloth bag was dropped onto the counter with a thump and Yumina confirmed it was filled to the brimming with gold and silver coins.

“Let’s see... In total, this is 15 gold coins. Yes, this would be enough to hire an A-Rank adventurer... Actually, it should be enough for some S-Ranks... So, the magic really was aimed at your daughters after all?”

“...I don’t quite understand what kind of magic it is myself, I just know that it was after them. I was hoping it was just a mistake the first time, but now that it’s happened twice it’s obvious what’s going on.”

Shirley does her best to calm her heart. Just thinking about the idea of a pervert trying to cast some sort of unknown magic on her ten-year-old girls, it’s hard to keep that bloodlust of hers from running riot.

“I want to put pressure on Canary to help me find the culprit... But is she not in the Kingdom right now?”

“Yes. She was called by a cousin of mine who works as a clerk to assist with some business, she’s currently in the Merchant Republic in the eastern seas.”

“So she isn’t around when I actually need her to be?”

Normally that demon woman is a pest, but Shirley can’t deny that the abilities and knowledge that granted her the title of the world’s greatest magician are real.

No matter what she thinks of her, if it came down to it she wouldn’t just identify the curse, but also quite easily find and bring the caster before Shirley.

“I sent out a letter telling her about what’s happened, but it will take some

time to reach her. Magical communication tools can't reach overseas, after all."

"Is that right... Anyways, in the meantime, until an adventurer accepts the request I'll just have to stay by my daughters' side-----"

"Oho? This is unusual, seeing Shirley submit a request."

As she was about to turn to leave, Asterios spoke from behind her, with the rookie training party in tow.

"Woah, it's true. Lemme see, lemme see."

"Oi, stop trying to grab it suddenly."

Even though Cudd tried to stop Leia who was attempting to grab the request from the table, Shirley didn't mind and held it up in a way that made it easy for Leia to read.

"...Eh? Huh? Your daughters are being targeted? Why?"

"I really don't have any idea..."

"Going off how you've described it, I can't help but think that someone is trying to make them slaves."

"Wait, Mister Asterios!"

"It's fine. It's possible that's true."

If they know the motives of their enemy, the list of potential culprits can be narrowed down considerably. For example, if it's true that slavers are responsible like Asterios is suggesting, then Shirley can simply raid every slaver outpost in the country and kill everyone in her way until the curses stop.

Since the Kingdom pursues racial equality in its laws, slavers are outlaws who no one would have any qualms with her wiping out.

"Well, if it was slavers involved it would be a simple thing to submit a request to the guild to subdue them, but I fear that is not the case."

"What do you mean...?"

"Recently, the Royal Army conducted major anti-criminal operations in the country and right now most criminal organizations are laying low."

The special law enforcement and public order sections of the army have a reputation for excellence. In addition to their information gathering tactics, their swift and powerful enforcement is well known across the continent, every major well-known criminal in the country except for the 《Phantom Thief》are currently behind bars.

“Considering just how many marks they’ve put away lately, I don’t think they’ll take the Royal Army that lightly as to poke their heads out now.”

“But what if... The person casting this magic was acting from where the power of the Kingdom doesn’t reach?”

“Oho? Then, Shirley, do you have some idea?”

Shirley shook her head.

“Honestly, I don’t really know. I can’t say for sure... I just had an unpleasant thought.”

“?”

“Returning to the topic, can you take this request? All four of you can use magic, so if you work together there might be something you can do.”

She asked them whilst holding out the request, but the party looked at each other grimly.

“I know of several ways to prevent magical interference, but investigating it is another matter entirely. For the task that you ask of us, it is better to employ a magician who is an all-around natural rather than just a barrier user like I.”

“I-I’m no good either.”

“I know resistance spells to use in battles, but they’re nothing that complicated.”

“It’s the same for me...”

Everyone said their piece with a sullen expression. Just like Asterios said, this is a request for magicians with high technical experience and proficiency in advanced magic.

Just as she was thinking that it would be unreasonable to request a party with

no real magical expert for this task, Asterios brought the bottom of his fist down onto his palm.

"Now that you mention it, there is someone I know who may be able to help."

"This person, are they an adventurer?"

"Yes, and an S-Rank at that."

The mere mention of the guild's highest rank sends a shiver down the three E-Ranked adventurers spines.

"They're called The Illusionary Butterfly', like you, they're an adventurer who seems to have earned a nickname, she was still a rookie around the time I started teaching."

"Ah, the S-Rank based in the North-Western City, famous for being the youngest ever to make that rank."

Shirley had heard of her before and she was definitely suitable for the request, but S-Ranks are notoriously busy so it's probably out of the question.

As she frets about which A-Ranked magicians in the frontier town would be free or capable to fulfil the request, Yumina timidly raised her hand.

"Um... That person you're talking about is a relative of mine. Grandm-I mean, the Guild Master has her as one of her students."

"That means... The Illusionary Butterfly and Canary are blood-related as well?"

Quite unexpectedly, more information about the strongest witch's lineage has come out. Although she's worried about just how far the apple falls from the tree, Shirley wants to put an end to this as soon as possible by whatever means.

"Well, should I give her a call for you? Since you were one of her instructors, you should put in a word as well Mister Asterios."

"I don't mind doing that."

"...Then, could you please contact her for me? I don't mind raising the request fee somewhat."

Yumina flashed an exceptional businesswoman's smile and rushed to use the

magic communication tool.

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 26

The Illusionary Butterfly

The stained glass window that portrayed the goddess in seven different colours was soaked in the sunlight and shone brilliantly.

The basic principles of magic cannot be separated from the knowledge passed down since ancient times, that there was an original existence that created this world.

It is hard to judge just when exactly the church that venerated the Goddess began, but judging by the surviving records it must have been at least 2,000 years ago.

Was the entire religion thought up as a means to shepherd the faithful? Or did the progenitor of the church really have a divine experience? It's hard to know since it happened so long ago.

The people who explore the ancient tombs to collect knowledge such as that are known as adventurers, archaeologists, or perhaps a mixture of both? Many adventurers study archaeology to expand their own horizons, after all.

Speaking of which, the S-Ranked adventurer who dwells in the

Northwesternmost city of the Kingdom, ‘The Illusionary Butterfly’ Grania is both an archaeologist and an adventurer, a top-rate witch who enjoys living her life in that grey area of a profession.

“Mm... Between the Father’s sermon and that scholar’s thesis... It’s a little hard to reconcile the two of them.”

There are buildings great and small around, but near every city in the Kingdom has a chapel and this city in the Northwest is no exception.

The service with a delicate yet strict atmosphere where the Father instructs his flock in the teaching of the Goddess had come to an end. Once everyone had left, Grania’s slightly mocking voice rang throughout the empty chapel.

“The Goddess took pity on its vagrant soul and created the earth for the Ageless Dragon? Or, massive collisions of mass and energy, without intent or purpose? Fufufu, I wonder which is really correct?”

In front of an impossible to unravel conundrum, Grania smiles as if that’s half the fun.

Although she hadn’t been able to defeat that Dragon King, she still ran her hand along the staff she had crafted from its broken horn in a very good mood.

The corpse of an ancient dragon which is a treasure trove of history in of itself, in addition to the material recovered from the dragon king that retreated, not to mention the new ancient ruin that had been discovered and the dusty old tomes written in an unknown language that had been discovered within.

Furthermore, the progress of cracking the code to the inner sanctum of the crystal temple has been even faster than expected, they had found it in the woods near a hobbit village south of the city.

“Aaah, this is why I just adore both archaeology and adventure.”

Running two concurrent jobs that can satisfy both her intellectual curiosity and pride is very appealing for Grania. She got her first taste after being roped into it by her meddlesome living ancestor, but now she’s hooked.

Other blood relatives of theirs often boast that they’re related to Grania and ‘The Golden Witch’, but since she can’t even remember most of their faces,

they're not of interest to Grania.

"Besides... Fufu, I'll be meeting with such a genuinely interesting person as well very soon."

Remembering the communication she got from that relative of hers who she loved like a little sister back in the old days, Grania laughed bewitchingly.

She had also been asked to take on the request from the Minotaur who had instructed her when she was just starting out as an adventurer, but even without him she would have accepted the request just looking at the contents.

It's not the matter of the reward, it was the client itself who demanded her attention. One of the best swordswoman in the guild who nevertheless remains at B-Rank, whose alias alone proves that she should be amongst the most famous of the S-Ranks.

And whilst she's very interested in the 'Demonic White Sword', Grania's true fascination lies with the swords she knows that Sword Demon possesses.

Four years ago, when she had been freshly promoted to A-Rank, she learned of the existence of two magical swords that had been the supporting pillars of an ancient and powerful country, two objects holding immense archaeological value.

"To think that someone got there before I could... It's so utterly frustrating."

There are still many mysteries surrounding the mythical country known as Valonias, though it has at least been proven to exist when many doubted that it truly did.

In the deepest part of a monster-infested ancient ruin, where lesser monsters don't dare tread— She had heard this was where those twin swords lay in rest and had rushed there, only to find the monsters all defeated and the place on the pedestal where the swords ought to lay empty.

"Depending on the outcome of the request, there may be an additional reward... hm? Then, it doesn't just have to be gold."

With those words leaving her lips, Grania disappeared from the chapel without laying a finger on the door. A blue butterfly fluttered onto the top of

the pew where she had sat, then was extinguished like a light.

There are no fancy things like restaurants in this frontier town. For things not directly related to the adventuring industry like schools to exist were rare.

Shops that sell tools, weapons and armour are the most common. The only establishments that sell food seem to only stock liquor and snacks.

After nearly a decade of living in this town, the only place Shirley knows that she can go out to have a cup of tea is the Guild's sitting room.

It was in that place that the S-Ranked adventurer 'The Illusionary Butterfly' had asked to receive the details of Shirley's request.

"Mama..."

"..."

"Don't worry."

She gave both their little hands a squeeze. As Shirley walked through the back of the guild towards the reception room, she gently held the hands of her anxious daughters.

She had already told Sophie and Tio about the magic that was trying to interfere with them.

Since it's all about them, she couldn't hide it forever and told them all she knew, urging them to be careful.

Sophie drank tea in the waiting room as if to distract herself before Yumina opened the door.

"Miss Shirley, the adventurer is here... Big sis, this way."

"Yes, thank you."

The person who entered the room was a beautiful woman, who seemed to be far more similar to Shirley than her relative Canary.

In contrast to Shirley who wore a neat and clean blouse with a long white skirt exposing very little, this beauty exposed her back, shoulders and ample cleavage, her black clothing also amplified her thighs and buttocks whilst on her

head she wore a characteristic tri-cornered witch hat. A beauty that makes no apologies for voluptuousness.

Tall for a woman and looking to be in her mid-twenties with long violet hair, the atmosphere that surrounded her was much more sagely than her outward appearance might suggest.

(...She looks awesome.)

(Yeah, with that chest and everything.)

“.....”

Without a hint of contempt, Sophie shares Tio's wonder at the flashy looking woman in front of them, whilst Shirley finds it hard to meet the eye of someone who can dress so shamefully by her standards.

“It's lovely to meet you. I'm the S-Rank adventurer, Grania... I believe this is the first time we've met, 'Demonic White Sword'.”

“Yes, though this isn't the first time I've heard of 'The Illusionary Butterfly'... You exceed the already... interesting image I had of you.”

“Fufu... I shall accept that as a compliment.”

Then, she glanced at the twins. Watching them as they trembled slightly, Grania showed a genuinely heartfelt smile.

“And I'm also very pleased to meet you two lovely young ladies. I've heard a lot about you... Please feel free to just call me Grania.”

“Ah, it's nice to meet you.”

“...Hello.”

Shirley was a little surprised at how Grania acted. Considering she was both a direct relative and disciple of that chaotic and tumultuous Canary, she had expected more of the same, but the impression she got was a calm and kind person.

“I'm sorry that my old lady has caused you a lot of trouble up until now. It seems that her head is just as immature as her body.”

“No, that's not something you have to apologize for.”

If the appearance is young, then so is the head. Shirley had never really thought about that concept before.

It's something she doesn't want to admit because she would lose her dignity as a parent, but if the theory of mentality being linked to physical appearance is true despite one's real age, then that could also apply to Shirley.

That might be one of the reasons why Canary, despite living for a thousand years, still behaves like a selfish child.

(If I look at Martha, it seems like that sense of shame becomes a little smaller as you grow older, but...)

Her sense of virtue still can't let her relax around the idea of exposed skin. Things like those overexposing maid clothes from before, in her mind they shouldn't even exist.

"Really though... Both mother and daughters have eyes that sparkle like jewels. I wonder if it's related to that exceptional talent of yours that I have heard rumours about?"

"I wouldn't know anything about that."

Shirley woke up to that unknown power when Sophie and Tio were still in the womb.

Whether or not the beauty of their eyes was impacted by that power of hers, she hadn't ever really considered it-----

(Could it have had some influence on them when they were still in my womb?)

Shirley, who had never thought of the possibility before, suddenly looked at her two beloved girls.

"Mama? What's wrong?"

"...No, it's nothing. Let's just move on."

"True, we have something else to discuss."

It's not necessary to get wrapped up in anxiety discussing a useless hypothetical. As Shirley judged so Grania took a sip of the tea that Yumina had

handed her.

“First thing’s first, the investigation of the magic... Ah, excuse me for one moment.”

Grania gently rested both her index fingers on Sophie and Tio’s foreheads, their tips began to glow with a green colour.

The gesture is used as an alternative to chanting. Having closed her eyes, Grania watched the stream of magic through the back of her eyelids, then she nodded once and opened them again.

“This is... It forces one to act against their own will. It’s a large scale ritual, something done to a distant opponent.”

“You already understand that much?”

“That’s right. Using the detection magic, I could pick up traces of the caster’s residual thoughts... Like you said, your daughters are definitely being targeted with this magic.”

Shirley frowned hard at the assessment of this expert mage. Although she was proven right, it hurts even more because she wanted to be told she was wrong.

“Where is the caster?”

“As for that, once the other party uses the magic once more I can investigate it... How many times have you interfered with it now?”

“Twice before submitting the request, once after.”

It’s no exaggeration to say that the magic is being cast at a rapid rate, considering it has only been five days since the first attempt.

“Hmm... I understand. In that case, for the time being, I shall stay in this town and set up various countermeasures. I’ll have to live in quite close quarters for some time, is that alright?”

“I don’t mind, but...”

She glanced at the twins.

“It’s fine with me. You did come to help us, after all.”

"I'm ok. You seem reliable."

"Fufufu... Such honest children."

Grania looked at the girls gently. For Shirley, she's just grateful to have such a skilled mage nearby.

She can cut whatever she sees, but Shirley has a hard time dealing with what she cannot.

"By the way, I wanted to talk about the reward."

"...I am still preparing the money I mentioned in the request form and there might be additional rewards like I mentioned, is that not enough?"

"It's about that additional reward."

Grania leaned in and whispered in Shirley's ear in a seductive voice.

"I don't care for the gold... Instead, show me all the magical swords you possess."

It was something she hadn't expected to hear. When Shirley's eyes widened at this strange request, Grania giggled softly.

"I'm an archaeologist after all... I have an excellent eye for antiques. Es~pe~cially things like... Say, the magic swords of ancient Vallonias?"

It seems like an unacceptable demand at first... For adventurers, it's a golden rule to never reveal their full hand to anyone but their trusted party members and partners.

Shirley had used the abilities of Ig-Alima and Sul-Sagana during the Dragon War, but she had not displayed their full capabilities.

As Shirley glared at her in suspicion, Grania spoke as if she had seen her inner thoughts.

"Don't worry too much about it. Even if you refuse me, I shall still carry out that request of yours and simply take the gold as the additional reward. ...This is simply my request should we not be able to conclude a favourable settlement in regards to that additional reward. No matter what you might go through after this little meeting of ours though, I hope you keep my request in mind."

Looking into Grania's eyes as she spoke, it seemed like she was telling the truth. Certainly, it was Shirley who didn't say that the additional reward would be in gold and if she refused this request now, what if that potentially affected the quality of her work?

It would be best to show some good faith here. Besides, for Shirley, the safety of her daughters will always easily win out over notions of confidentiality.

"I don't mind. From now on, I'll recognize you as a temporary party member, that way I'll show you everything you'd like. If showing the magical swords I own can help us trust each other better, it's not a big price to pay."

"Thank you for your understanding... I thought you might have refused since I've heard stories about how difficult you are to work with... But you're actually quite a good person, aren't you?"

Over these past ten years, one thing Shirley hasn't grown accustomed to is accepting praise.

Although she had only agreed to show her weapons simply as a measured act of good faith, it seems like she accidentally got on the good side of this witch... Well, it didn't feel too bad.

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 27

Man-Eating Birds are a Cinch

A flock of strange stag-headed birds soar through the sky on bronze wings, the shadows they cast on the ground below causing the deer and the birds below them to cry out in terror.

This world obeys the laws of the jungle. Whether human or monster, the laws have been the same since ancient times, the weak will become the sustenance of the strong.

In such a world, the creature known as the peryton is unique. Whether in predation or in a struggle for territory, there are usually good reasons to attack another living creature, but this monstrous and mysterious murderous bird is different.

Although research is still slow due to the extreme danger involved, the Peryton is known to attack people completely without reason... It's perhaps better to call them man-eaters than murderous, in any case, they're an extremely troublesome species.

Despite it being confirmed that the peryton does actually hunt other

monsters and animals for food, it gives a strange priority to humans, even going so far as to attack a human adventurer over an injured rabbit, then flying away not even eating its kill.

It's so needlessly barbarous because the peryton is an intelligent monster, despite its illogical killings. Targeting people on instinct rather than reasoning, the Peryton is an exceptionally brutal monster for humans to deal with.

And above all, the most terrifying thing about the peryton is its characteristic magic. As if it was always intended to be a natural enemy of mankind, the power to stop people in their tracks once they enter its shadow has been the downfall of many adventurers and knights.

That's just for one bird, the danger of an entire flock should be obvious. To kill a group like this, an A-Rank adventurer isn't enough, you'd at least need to be S-Rank... And even then, it would be limited to those who could perform wide-ranging saturation spells that would keep them from entering the peryton's shadow.

“.....”

“CAAAAAAAAAAAAAAW!?”

Ignoring such a common-sense strategy, Shirley dances between the necks of the birds in mid-air slaying as she goes, the white hair that's the origin of her nickname flowing in the wind.

As if ignoring that these monsters should be the natural enemy of a mere swordsman, she fights in a place that should be completely out of reach for her, decapitating the perytons one after another using swords drawn from her imagination alchemy.

As soon as they realize they're faced with a human, the monsters attack fiercely with both claws and antlers, but they're cut down from the sky with magnificent swordplay.

The corpses of the perytons display clean cuts as if there had been no struggle at all, their blood falling like a gentle rain as they fall to the earth.

“CAWWWW CAWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW!!”

Still, that flock of strange murderous birds won't retreat. The monsters whose urge to kill overpowers their instinct to survive swarm from all directions to kill the swordswoman with snow-white hair.

(This monster... They really are quite easy to kill considering the price, right?)

However, that murderous instinct that is thought of like a plague by other adventurers is convenient for Shirley, like bringing lambs to the slaughter.

Swords flash and flesh flies, as if waltzing through thin air her blades dance through the surviving Perytons.

Any beast that tries to challenge her head on is cut down by the blade, whilst any that tries to circle around to avoid it is dispatched by daggers and swords thrown with impeccable precision.

It is a bloody spectacle that plays out in the sky. Shirley didn't relax until the head of the final peryton landed on the earth below with barely an audible thud.

"Fuu... That should do it. If there are no surprises in store, I should get back home."

Right now, her daughters Sophie and Tio are being threatened by some malicious magic.

If you are wondering why at such a time Shirley is fighting a flock of stag-headed monsters far away from the frontier town, then the story that played out this morning is key.

—

"Deficit House? That's a somewhat ominous name, isn't it?"

In order to best prevent more magical interference and investigate its source, it was decided that it would be best for Grania to move into the same inn that the family lives in, though she had a bit of a blank stare when she heard the name.

"That was thought up by that grandfather... I mean, the founder named it, but I haven't heard the origin of the name myself."

"Ah! I know it!"

Although she hadn't really thought about it until now, she was a little concerned when asked about it herself. Unexpectedly, Sophie had the answer to these women's questions.

"Miss Martha said it's because it's meant to be a place where adventurers who are nearly out of energy and out of cash can fall down!"

"Hmmm, is that right?"

She nodded at those words. For an adventurer, running out of stamina and collapsing in the middle of a quest would mean death. Even if they've set up a camp, since they're out in the middle of the wilderness it's difficult to simply sleep as they have to retain some sort of vigilance at all times.

The name makes sense when you think of desperate adventures almost in the red energy-wise needing a place to collapse into sleep.

"Yeah. Apparently, that was what he always wanted. He said that if he ever went bankrupt, it would just be funny."

That last part may be pushing it a little far. Even dark jokes should have a limit.

"We're back."

During their talk, the family had arrived in front of the inn. When they opened the door and entered, Grania curiously looked around the interior.

"Oh my... It's quite simple, but it's nonetheless bright and tidy. In fact, I think I like it."

"Oho, so you think so as well?"

Did she sense a customer's presence or was it just coincidence? Either way, a middle aged woman with brown hair emerged from the dining room... It was Martha, one of the married couple that run the Deficit House.

"Miss Martha, we've returned!"

"I'm back."

"Yes, welcome home. So, is this adventurer lady a guest?"

She smiled as she looked at the gold tag that hung from Grania's neck, proof

that she was an S-Rank adventurer.

Her usual experience as a landlady is dealing with fatigued and penniless adventurers, not with the talents that reside at the apex of the guild.

"Yes, I'll be in your care for a little while. Are there any spare rooms?"

"I've already heard the story from Shirley. You came to save these girls from some pervert magician, right?"

Martha is known for being a little rough, but she gently rested her hands on the twins' heads. Almost like she was a grandmother watching over her granddaughters.

"Jeez, it's utterly disgusting that someone would try to harm these nice young girls."

"Fufu... You two sure are beloved, hmm?"

"Of course they are. I've known these three for ten years, they're almost like my actual daughters and granddaughters, y'know?"

"Uu... I'm happy to hear that."

"Mm... It's embarrassing though."

"Oh my, I think you're still much too young to be called a grandmother?"

"Ahahahaha! You're not too bad at flattery yourself, miss!"

Martha and Grania seemed to be fast friends straight away. It caused her to remember just how rude and threatening she had been when she first arrived.

When she was twenty years old, Shirley had come to the Deficit House acting like a wounded beast whose only concern was protecting her daughters. Seeing betrayal everywhere and suspecting that people were only out to harm her children, she batted away the hands that had reached out to help her in good conscience again and again.

Although she kept up that guard, it was only the couple that ran the Deficit House that never withdrew their caring hands.

Shirley eventually gave into such persistent people, trusting them to care for her daughters when she was away.

(Now that I think about it, I must have seemed like their rebellious daughter at the time?)

It might be because of Martha's influence that she's actually able to connect with others again.

If a child is strongly influenced by their parents, then Shirley really must be like a daughter to Martha.

(Speaking of parents... Those people are...)

Back then, there were many people who wondered if Shirley really was a true child of those two, considering the way she was constantly tormented and left in rags.

But, that's all in the past. Just as her real parents had abandoned Shirley, Shirley had abandoned thoughts of them from her mind.

(Such an unimportant thing to suddenly remember.)

Shirley closed her eyes for a moment, letting those memories of the past ebb away, then opened them once more.

"Also, I'll be paying for Miss Grania's rent, I'll give it to you now."

"Oh, don't worry about such a thing. It's not like you can afford it right now."

"No, actually I'm fine."

Because of the rewards handed out as a result of the Dragon War, the pockets of many of the adventurers in this remote town are bulging.

...Of course, there are many adventurers who have already spent it all, some of them in a single night, but Shirley is diligently saving for her daughters' future.

The funds she's saved up are being put to good use currently. If it's for her daughters' sake, she won't be stingy when spending it, just like how she used that money to hire the best magician money can buy in Grania.

"I don't mind the expenses. If you need any extra materials or money, just say the word. Just please do everything in your power to help my daughters and keep them safe, you're the only one I can rely on."

"I... I understand. So, can you let me go for just a moment? It's a bit painful, you know."

Shirley had her hands on Grania's shoulders and was gripping with a bit more strength than she intended as she said that, the S-Ranked 'Illusionary Butterfly' was struggling a bit under her power.

"Well it may seem sudden, but I should apply the counter-interference magic straight away, so can you guide me to your room?"

"Ah, this way."

After that, Grania finished the preparations a little after lunch.

"Well then, can I start?"

"Y-Yes."

"Mm."

"If something bad happens, don't worry, I'll put a stop to it."

Shirley gripped a short sword as she stood nearby. She's ready to end the ritual at a moment's notice if she senses danger by cutting through the flow of magic that powers it.

"Fufu... One in a billion... No, perhaps entirely unique."

As she lightly tapped the floor with the base of her staff, the magic square on the floor begins to glow faintly and the wind kicked up by the magical energy causes the twins' hair to shake and stir.

The ritual is completed after only five seconds and when it was over Sophie and Tio stared at their palms, clenching their little fists.

"Is it already over?"

"Yes. Now all you need do is sleep... When that magic interferes again simply let it act without interfering, my own magic shall allow us to see the history of its caster."

"History?"

"The hint of sorcery... In many forms of magic, the will of the caster lingers in its residue power. I specialize in detecting types of magic, the purpose of its use,

as well as prevention.”

Shirley’s quite impressed with her words. To read the true motivations in an opponent’s magic after it has been cast, she hasn’t heard of any famous mages able to do that, living or dead.

Grania is a rare breed of mage, innovative and driven, she has a reputation for a pioneering brand of magical research and these are the results. The adventurer recommended by Asterios was truly powerful, the perfect person for this request.

“However, there are some materials that may be necessary to find out more about the caster...”

“Tell me what you need.”

—Since countermeasures were taken, she should be relieved, but Shirley still can’t sleep in a situation like this.

Sitting in the same room as her daughters as they slept, she’s staying up all night, anxious that the moment she closes her eyes the curse will appear.

“...It’s here.”

And in the dead of the night, the opportunity arrived. It crept in through a gap in the window like black smoke and sought to envelop her daughters in its smog, but it was stopped by a clear barrier of light.

She can only see this countering magic because of her eyes as well. The black haze grew smaller and smaller every time it smashed into the barrier.

Just like Grania had said, the black mist that tried to attach itself to Sophie and Tio had completely dissolved by the time dawn broke.

“So? Was it prevented properly?”

“Yes, I didn’t see any problems... Wait, what are you doing?”

As Grania stepped into Shirley’s room wearing a thin negligee, Shirley thrust a coat at her covering up her chest and exposed legs.

“Please wear this. I’ve been thinking this from the beginning, but your

clothing really is far too bold. What would I do if my daughters started copying you?"

"Ah~n. You're so rough..."

Shirley cuts off Grania's lewd murmurings by cupping a hand over her mouth. These two really are complete opposites.

"Well, fine~. More importantly, I need to check the 'history'."

Placing her index fingers on the foreheads of the two twins who still slept so peacefully it was hard to believe they had been attacked by magic during the night, the barrier must have done a fantastic job.

"Fuu~n... Apparently, since they've failed three times already, the other side is quite cautious."

"That makes sense. This is the first time it's come so late at night."

"Moreover, they did their best not to leave any traces of magecraft... But they sure made a mess of it, hmm? They're just going by the book, not even a lick of imagination, how utterly boring."

Many well-known magics have similarly well-known countermeasures. As Grania said, since the barrier worked so well, the caster must be sticking quite close to the book.

"Well now, since I have the history in hand we should be able to lay our dear caster bare after another ritual. Everything after that, I leave to you."

"Of course."

There had been something bestial clawing at her this whole time. A mother's instinct to find whoever was doing this and make sure that they would never have the ability to interfere with her children ever again.

"The caster used a typical remote ceremonial magic... This kind of magic requires something like the hair or blood of the target, but that should not be an especially hard thing for them to obtain, no?"

Although Shirley and her family essentially use the Deficit House as an apartment, there are in truth many visitors who stay for only a single night. If they knew in advance that Sophie or Tio were staying here, it wouldn't be too

difficult for them to find a single strand of hair if they were disguised as one of these guests.

"I'm not even sure I want to know what you'll do... Well, anyways. The important thing is to find out who this caster really is."

"Do you have all the materials you need?"

"Let's see... I've got most of everything, but what I'd really like is the antler of a peryton to get the most accurate results."

It was at that moment, the fate of that flock of murderous birds was decided.

I hadn't actually heard of perytons until now, guess I'm just fantasy illiterate.

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 28

Troubles of a Doting Parent

By a stroke of good fortune, there was a request to subdue perytons available, so she was able to secure the rental of a dragon mount from the guild. Once she discovered the flock of birds that appeared like a haze on the horizon, she flew into them and demolished them in no time.

The bodies of monsters with inherent magical powers are very useful for the creation of potions, tools and magical rituals, especially horns and antlers which are especially valuable.

Since ancient times, horns have been worshipped as symbols of wisdom and power. Following the origin of the story, the first and foremost amongst horned magical creatures are dragons, who are said to store their magical energy in their horns.

Likewise, for the peryton, a creature who traps its prey through its magical shadow, their magical power flows from the antlers.

"Well... Three should be good enough."

She cut off the three biggest antlers she could find amongst the corpses and

loaded them onto the back of the dragon.

"Break time is over, so please fly for me once again."

"Gwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!"

Instead of packing food for the dragon, she simply fed it sections of one of the perytons she had knocked down.

Shirley took its happy cry as affirmation and jumped on the saddle, when she took the reins the dragon roared and took to the sky.

Her white hair rippled as they flew, the air is incredibly cold compared to the air back down on earth, but that's no obstacle to a mother who wants to get back to her children straight away.

(It's 12 o'clock now... If nothing happens, I should be back in time for supper.)

She looked at the pocket watch she took out from her breast. She took the flying mounted dragon not just because it would be advantageous for an aerial battle, but because this fight was on a plains quite far away from that remote town and this was the fastest dragon available.

Even if she's desperate to find out the culprit, she wants to be away from Sophie and Tio's side for as little time as possible.

(Martha's there, sure, but to think I'd leave my daughters in the care of someone who I only just met yesterday...)

She's not quite sure if she should be happy about just how much she's changed.

In the first place, she doesn't completely trust Grania yet, it's still possible that she's working with whoever Shirley's enemy is.

Even so, no matter how much Shirley wants to protect her girls, as a swordsman protecting is all she can do, she's powerless to actually solve the crime.

The only solution was to borrow the power of a real mage. She regretted not ever having studied curses and suggestion magic herself.

(I'm still so inexperienced... With these weak hands of mine, how can I protect

anything?)

She promised herself once more. That no matter what happened, Shirley will always do the best she can for her daughters.

“Wawaaa!? I did it!”

“Fufufu... Yes, it seems so. You really are very talented, hmm?”

“Really!?”

With that resolution powering her, Shirley managed to get back to the Deficit House at 3 o'clock. When she returned to the room carrying the peryton antlers, she saw Sophie and Grania having a pleasant chat.

Suddenly deciding to watch them from the shadows instead of revealing, she saw a small ball of water floating in the palm of Sophie's hand.

With Grania teaching elemental manipulation magic in such an easy to understand manner with Sophie faithfully reproducing it, they seem really happy together, like an older sister teaching the young one, or perhaps... When she imagined the other possibility, Shirley began to get upset and shake on the spot.

“Ah... Ahhhhhhhh...!”

Shirley tottered back down to the dining room like a newborn deer, not exactly living up to the moniker ‘Demonic White Sword’.

“Hmm? What's wrong?”

“They! ...They!! They!?”

“No, I have no idea what you're talking about?”

Although the skilled warrior seemed completely lost for words, Martha still comforted Shirley as she raised a quivering finger and pointed it towards her room.

“My position as a mother... My position as a mother is at stake...!”

“Ha? What do you mea-Ahh, now I get it.”

Martha nods as she finally understood.

"Since she had free time waiting for you, Grania decided to teach Sophie some magic. I don't think it's something worth getting so upset about."

"But... If it's just about the basics of magic even I can teach that...! To think that... That person would teach Sophie her first spell without me...!"

It seems that Grania, who embodies the very picture of an adult woman, has shaken Shirley's belief in herself as a mother to the very core.

Since magic isn't taught in school and is usually left up to the parent, Martha understands Shirley's fretting, but still admonishes the single mother.

"Just why are you so upset? You didn't want to teach Sophie and Tio magic, right? That's why it should be fine for Sophie to learn it from another mage."

"That's... Hmm..."

Not just limited to magic, but handling elements, in general, can be quite dangerous, without receiving basic magical instructions one's magical power could run amok.

Small-scale elemental magic like moving water from glasses and moving wind about a room. Despite not being a professional like Grania, Shirley was capable of doing that much.

She knew basic magic and if she wanted to could teach it as well, but...

"...Sophie and Tio said they wanted to become adventurers."

"Yeah."

"But, those two are still just children. If they just focus on one thing at such an early age, won't they deprive themselves of other opportunities?"

"I see. I understand how you feel."

It's a little like a bartender patronizing a particularly troublesome customer complaining over their drink, but Shirley is completely serious.

As a parent, it's only natural that she wants those two to live a peaceful life rather than braving danger as an adventurer.

Shirley did tell both of them that if they could pass a test at age 15, she would

accept them being adventurers, but this is something else entirely.

She didn't teach her children swordsmanship or magic because she didn't want to cut down on their future opportunities, or the dreams that might blossom for them once they grow up.

"But... If the time ever did come to teach them... I wanted to be the one who...!"

"So, that's the problem, huh."

Truthfully, she never thought too badly about actually having mother and daughter training sessions, in fact, the idea got her a little giddy, even if she wouldn't admit it.

But, having been beaten to the punch by Grania, Shirley's secret desire had been scattered to the wind.

Even if no one has actually done anything wrong per se, this silly parent had to retreat to the dining room to calm down and collect her thoughts.

"I always thought that I wanted to do everything for my daughters, but something like this... My confidence as a mother... But if I got in their way and Sophie hated me, I wouldn't be able to live..."

"You may not think so yourself, but you're an excellent mother. In the first place, it was Sophie who asked to learn magic. And that's not the only thing, is it?"

Shirley must have been really conflicted. Nonetheless, Martha pet the head of the youthful semi-immortal, who was trying her best to respect her daughter's wishes.

"It's because you trust Grania that you came back here instead of interfering, right?"

"..."

Shirley nodded silently. Despite being a disciple of Canary, she was relieved that the adventurer recommended by Yumina and Asterios turned out to be such a good and sensible person, although she hadn't expected her to inflict this kind of damage on her.

"Ah, Mama! Welcome home!"

Looking at that face lifted her mood instantly. Sophie rushed over to Shirley, holding a cup of water in her hand.

"...Yes, I'm back. So, what are you doing?"

Shirley did her best to keep up her usual prudent attitude. Although it might have seemed like an awfully abrupt change to any onlooker, Shirley desperately didn't want to show such a miserable appearance to her daughter, but Sophie is in such a good mood she didn't seem to notice at all.

"Um, I came to return this glass to the kitchen... Oh yeah! Watch what I can do!"

Placing the cup on the table, Sophie pointed both her hands at it and began to murmur.

"《Water》.....《Ball, Body》.....Umm.....《Floating》.....?"

It's a little stilted, but it's definitely a magical chant... It is the verbalization of the self-suggestion that can transform the world around the caster through the power of magical phenomena.

The water in the cup began to vibrate on its own and eventually forms a sphere in thin air, floating above Sophie's palm. This is 《Water Bullet》, it is among the most basic of beginner's magic, a magic that shoots water projectiles at such strength and speed that it can even pierce iron.

"I did it! Hey, mama, isn't this amazing!? I learned it from Miss Grania!"

Sophie, who usually tries her best to act like an adult, can't help jumping up and down with excitement as she boasts to her mother about learning her first magic.

Compared to Shirley who could produce swords from thin air without chants and fought with extreme speed and strength in combat, it was a rather lousy magic, but when Sophie showed her a face full of smiling wonder, she couldn't help but pat her head.

"Yes, it's still a little rough around the edges, but this is very good for your first try."

“Ehehehe...”

Sophie doesn't even try to hide how much she enjoys it when her mother stroked her soft white hair.

Seeing her daughter so happy, who was she to interfere? Shirley thought that to herself with a sigh.

“...”

“Hmm—... What's wrong? I'm flattered, but it's hard to work if you stare at me so much, you know~?”

“It's nothing.”

Later that night, as Grania worked on the ritual using the peryton antlers she had gathered, Shirley stared at her from behind with those piercing red and blue eyes.

She opened her mouth and spoke as if she had been mulling the words over for a while.

“Um... Thank you. For taking care of Sophie.”

“Ahh, you mean for helping her with the basics of magic? I just had free time, so don't worry yourself about it.”

Even if she was just killing time until she returned, Shirley still thought it was right to thank her for giving her daughter some guidance.

Then, as if to ruin the moment, Grania held her hand to her mouth and laughed haughtily.

“But really, I was slightly worried since I'm sure you'd loved to teach her magic yourself, but she was so lovely I just couldn't refuse, I'm glad that you aren't angry with me~”

“...Uuu....!”

“That reaction... Oh, I see? Fufufu... That's cute as well. To think you're older than me... I can't believe you're in your thirties.”

Hitting the bullseye, Grania seems to be enjoying teasing the ‘Demonic White

Sword' more and more. Shirley wants to withdraw what she said before, this woman really is Canary's disciple and relative through and through, she really should trust her instincts better.

"...More importantly, have you identified the culprit?"

"Ah, I'll be starting now. Please look."

Deciding not to press her luck with the woman who so obviously wants to change the subject, Grania holds an upside-down pyramid shaped object attached to a piece of string above a sheet of parchment.

Covering the dowsing tool in powdered peryton antler, it dangles above the black stained parchment that contains the sealed information of the caster.

As Grania held it suspended above the darkness, the tool moves and manipulates the stain in swirls, with white light beginning to emerge.

The dowsing tool and the black stain moved in tandem as if they were alive and eventually letters began to form on the page, letting Shirley see information about the abhorrent caster with her own two eyes.

"The name of the caster is Grace Barnes... Having a family name, he may be nobility, but does he sound familiar?"

"He does not... What else?"

As if at her urging, the dowsing tool swung once more and further information appeared on the page.

"Twenty-seven years old, he appears to be a minor researcher who has published several papers, personality wise he's quite a typical man for his age. Height 170 centimetres, weight 56 kilograms. His favourite meal is a full breakfast with a boiled egg, his hobbies are———"

"I don't care about his personal life. Is there anything more useful?"

"So impatient... He is the fourth son of a Baron and has been working in a mansion in his parent's fief for five years. His motivation for targeting your daughters was not a personal one, but because he received a request to do so."

Shirley frowned. It's all well and good to identify the caster, but now there's apparently a mastermind as well?

"The identity of the client is unknown... But, from where the caster lives, I feel you might be able to figure something out."

"Where is Grace Barnes?"

"The Barony is in the suburbs of the Imperial Capital... He lives in a mansion near the centre of the city."

The Imperial Capital. More than anything else she'd heard about the caster, that news shocked her most of all.

For anyone keeping track, that's the 100th chapter released on this blog.

"If only you actually dedicated all that to one series instead of trying to do like 20 maybe you'd actually finish something."

Yeah, I know, don't rub it in.

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 29

Meanwhile in the Empire

The Emperor's palace was in turmoil, much owed to the foul mood of its lord.
“What is happening!? Why won't my daughters come at all!?”

He flung his arm wildly and smashed a vase to the floor, his maid servant jumping in fright.

One month has passed since he learned about the two daughters he had with that villainous woman and ex-fiancé of his.

In order to bring the heirs to the Imperial throne home to the capital, he had asked four mages to cast suggestion magic on his daughters, but the first three of these casters had their curses rebound and their bodies sliced in two.

Although the fourth caster hadn't died, his curse was prevented by some means and Albert was struggling to find a magician that could actually do the job.

“Shit... All of these magicians are worthless... Can't even cast a spell on a ten-year-old girl...!”

Albert stomped into his office, roughly rubbing at his hair and sitting down furiously in his seat, remembered the words his beloved wife had told them on the day of his ascension to the throne.

“Albert-sama’s benevolence will be known across the Empire... No, the whole continent will know you as a great man!”

Then why isn’t it happening? He was the ruler of the largest country on the continent, a man who was supposed to be an Emperor whose name would resound through the ages.

Does he turn his frustrations to that family living in the Kingdom? Vent his anger at the failures of the mages? Or, should he blame himself? Not having come to an answer, he sighed as he heard a knock at the door.

“Enter.”

“Please excuse me.”

An elderly man dressed in a tailcoat opened the door. It was the Lord Chamberlain who had long served the Imperial family.

“Her Highness Princess Philia wishes to be granted an audience, Your Imperial Majesty?”

Albert frowned when he heard the Chamberlain’s words.

Although Philia and Albert were brother and sister, their relationship had begun to deteriorate rapidly eleven years ago once she had started to question him and wading into politics herself.

“...Show her in.”

“At once.”

Despite that, if you exclude his daughters in the Kingdom, his sister is the one blood-related family member he has left. He decided to grant the audience, even if he was reluctant.

“Pardon me.”

A young but dignified voice sounds in the office. Albert couldn’t help staring at her when she entered, blonde hair shining in the sunlight from the window,

those blue eyes reflecting a strong force of will.

Philia Ragdoll, Princess of the Empire and his younger sister. Albert himself is loath to admit it, but she has strong popularity amongst the people, probably more than he or his government does.

"It has been quite some time, Your Majesty. Was it not half a year before I last had the privilege of looking upon your esteemed face?"

"Hmm, I hear that you're conducting your own tour of the Empire?"

Albert was disgusted by how she seemed to be acting like some innocent sister who was happy to see her brother, but he held his tongue.

In the past, she had always just been his cute little sister, but as time went by Albert grew more and more frustrated and bitter about how talented she grew up to be.

...Of course, Albert didn't realize it himself, but this feeling of inferiority that helped opened a chasm in their relationship.

"So, what is it you require of me?"

"I shall go straight to the crux of the matter. My older sister who fled the Empire eleven years ago... I heard that Shirley is now an adventurer in the Kingdom, living with her two daughters."

Philia stared coldly at him, those blue eyes that seemed to blame the Emperor.

"What's more, those two girls seem to share a connection to Your Majesty by blood."

Having come all this way to tell him personally and with such a cool tone, it must mean that the Princess is well aware of what the Emperor is up to.

"What are you thinking, Your Majesty? Relations with the Kingdom are already so tense... And now you seek to rob a woman you betrayed of her children! You took everything from her eleven years ago and now you want her daughters as well!"

"I betrayed her? No, the opposite! She sought to deceive me and, worse, she was unbearably cruel to Alice!"

Their relationship is already bad enough that they've started to argue only a few sentences into a conversation and the atmosphere in the room is tense. If you had told someone who didn't know the full story that eleven years ago, Shirley was very close with both brother and sister in this room, they wouldn't believe it.

"You still cling to such lies...! How can you believe such outrageous and unproven accusations!? Were you simply blinded by that harlot!?"

"How dare you speak that way about your sister in law!? Are you to say that her tears were mere lies as well!?"

"Of course I will! Why even mention tears? What can you possibly prove with that? What's more, for a woman who resides in the position of the Empress but cares more for her own debauchery than the poverty of the commons, I shall call her whatever I please."

In truth, this was the biggest reason Albert had come to hate Philia. How can his sister speak like that of his muse? The one who helps soothe his weary soul and takes him away from the stresses of power, if only for the time they spend together?

In fact, when Philia tries to bring up that Alice should be removed from her position every time they talk, the gap between them widens more and more.

Even worse than that, she's always pining over that evil woman who had attempted to deceive and swindle him.

"...Actually, right now, that woman doesn't matter. What matters is that, as the Emperor, you need to place your own people above this magical buffoonery. Even if those two are related by blood to Your Majesty, since Shirley was exiled as a criminal, her children are ordinary commoners who have nothing to do with the trappings of power. What's more, if this is heard about by King Edward, the Empire may gain an ill reputation for kidnapping."

It's not just a matter of trustworthy relations. In the worst case, trade relations could be ruptured with the Theocracy and the Duchy, having an effect on the economy of the already shaky Empire.

"Why would bad rumours spread simply because a father wishes to greet his

daughters? Besides, we can ignore the inane barking of such tiny countries in the first place.”

“The size of the country doesn’t matter!”

Albert’s ridiculous words giving her a headache, Philia desperately tried to reason with him.

“The Kingdom is a country that can be seen as the headquarters of the powerful Adventurer’s Guild and is ruled by the Black Lion King, a sage ruler the likes of which hasn’t been seen on the continent in centuries. It has a strong and well-trained army, so much so that the Duchy and the Theocracy don’t even think about going to war with them. On the other hand, our Empire is funded by the taxes of the people, but that woman’s ludicrous spending has plunged our treasury into chaos. Comparing the two countries, is it really wise to continue worsening our relations? Will you keep pulling on the Lion’s tail, he who considers his citizens an extension of his own body?”

“Y-you dare insult our Empire whilst being an Imperial family member yourself!?”

“I must tell Your Majesty the truth because he refuses to see reality!”

But those words didn’t reach the Emperor, in fact, Philia’s exasperated tone only made things worse. She tried to imagine the figure of the woman she admired so deeply. No matter how much she wanted to scream, she had to stay calm and cool, just like she did.

“In any case, Your Majesty must stop using magic to interfere with the Kingdom’s citizens and also rein in this insane spending. If you truly care for the suffering of the people, you must turn your eyes inward.”

“Two... Two girls who bear the right to inherit the Imperial throne dwell in the Kingdom. So long as Alice is being so unfairly accused for something that she cannot help, I have no intention of giving it up. What’s more, you accuse her of spending too lavishly, but it is necessary for the Empress to be dressed in finery and splendour to dazzle foreign guests and emissaries.”

“Big brother!!”

“Speak no more!”

She tried to reach out to him, calling him the way she used to, but Albert batted her hand away.

"I... I am the Emperor! A man who will become a legend of this continent! My judgement can never be wrong!?"

He looks like a petulant child. Albert glared at Philia with wild eyes, who was stunned into silence, then pointed a quivering finger at the door to his office.

"Get out! I don't want to see your face!"

"...Then, please pardon me."

Deciding not to add more oil to a raging fire, Philia curtseyed with as much respect as she could muster and left.

"....Haaaaa."

"Your Highness, is everything alright?"

The red haired knight Lumiliana rushed to her Princess' side when she emerged from the office, breathing a heavy sigh.

"I am fine, don't worry yourself."

"As much as I wish to believe you, you do not look fine at all. This palace is not fit to rest in, we should retire to the hotel by carriage. I managed to get a good room there."

She walked one step behind her Princess who maintained her grace and dignity, remaining vigilant in this palace that was full of enemies for her. Lumiliana stepped into the carriage after checking for any traps or sorcery, then invited the Princess in after her. As soon as Philia stepped inside, she collapsed into a seat, finally not having to keep up the farce.

"Ahh, jeeez...! Why is His Majesty always like this? Doesn't he realized he's being used by Alice at all!?"

"...It truly is a shame. If I may speak frankly, what I heard through the door was quite pathetic."

The two girls can't help but be disgusted with the emperor's disgraceful behaviour. Especially the way he had complete contempt for the Imperial

citernity.

"That's why I've been saying that woman is utterly unfit to be Empress. Oh, if only my older sister had become Empress instead, how amazing would things be..."

"Lady Shirley Earlgrey... The fiancée of the then crown prince, who was falsely charged eleven years ago and is now exiled to the Kingdom?"

"...Yes."

Philia was only six years old at the time, but she still fondly remembered meeting the person she admired all that time ago.

When Shirley was introduced as her future sister-in-law she had been struck by her beauty, intelligence and strength of character, as a Princess who had no blood related older sister she became very attached to her, trying to emulate her in every way she could.

Although they only truly had a relationship for about a year, Shirley and Philia had such a warm relationship it was like they were true sisters.

She was well-liked at the time by the previous Emperor and Empress and when Philia thought of Shirley becoming her true sister-in-law, she was happy from the bottom of her heart.

"Because of her white hair and strange eyes, she was ostracized from the Duke of Earlgrey's family, yet despite all that, she was still so kind. She always let me sit on her lap and we would read fairy tales together."

"I haven't met her, but I can tell just by listening to the story. She really was a lovely person, wasn't she?"

"Yes... That's why, such a thing..."

It was a chilly February day when she learned of the false conviction that had occurred whilst she and her parents were abroad.

They returned in a hurry once they heard the news, but by that time Shirley had already escaped after enduring torture for a month. Despite being so young at the time, Philia understood the truth the moment she saw that devilish woman wearing an evil smile, standing by her brother's side.

She was only seven at the time. Although she asked about where Shirley was every single day, the wound in her heart only deepened every time she was rebuffed, whilst also widening the relationship between herself and Albert.

“So, when I heard that my older sister was still alive in the Kingdom, I was really happy. I thought she may have died, so I was really surprised to hear that she had become an adventurer.”

“...Don’t you want to meet her? If that is what Your Highness wishes, I can escort you...”

“I cannot.”

She answered quietly, but immediately.

“The Imperial family has done something absolutely unforgivable to her. She won’t ever want to see my face again.”

“That’s... Your Highness, you don’t have to carry the guilt for something you didn’t do.”

“Even if I was young at the time, I can’t run away from the fact that I couldn’t do anything for her back then, not even speak up against my brother on her behalf.”

She was a member of the Imperial family. She may not have ordered it herself, but as someone at the top of society, she should have at least been able to do something for Shirley.

No matter what Lumiliana says, how can Philia as a member of the Imperial family that cast her aside, ever think that Shirley would want to see her again?

“I have no right to meet her and should simply pray for her happiness from afar, but...”

“But...?”

Because Albert was aiming for her two daughters, she couldn’t do nothing.

Using her intelligence sources, she had learned that Albert had hired various sorcerers to use magic in an attempt to kidnap the children, but all had failed so far.

What was that older brother of hers going to do next? Being his younger sister for such a long time, Philia had some idea.

"Lumiliana... This isn't an official order, but something I want to ask of you."

The person she loves like a sister is about to have what she holds most dear stolen from her by that elder brother once again. Even though she's sure that the person in question wants nothing to do with her, as a Princess she has to act.

The greatest political maneuverer of all the Princesses on the continent summoned a new determination and looked deep into the eyes of her best friend and faithful follower.

"Philia is one of the four ancient forms of Greek love, considered even more valuable than eros as it was a sign of an affectionate love amongst equals."

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 30

Bonds Between Adventurers

A few days after Grania had gifted Sophie and Tio a pair of magic resistant rings and returned to the Northwestern town she called home, Shirley was quite sullen.

If it really was an Imperial mage who had been targeting her daughters, the mastermind should be obvious.

Shirley doesn't fear him. But, if she just rushes into the viper's den, it's possible that the snake's poison may threaten Sophie and Tio's future.

She doesn't know the full details, but there's no reason for Imperial magi to target ordinary citizens of the Kingdom. Although she had originally thought the culprit might have been some pervert in the Kingdom who had eyes for her daughters, Shirley knew that the real answer was much worse.

(If an Imperial mage is trying to kidnap my girls despite me having been exiled as a criminal... I hate the thought of it, but the only reason I can think of is that man's blood they have.)

The face of Albert Ragdoll, the current Emperor and ex-fiancée who had betrayed her so terribly, flashed through her mind.

Word had already spread to the streets of the town Shirley lives in that relations between the Kingdom and the Empire are worse than ever, with very little by way of people travelling between the two nations.

It's difficult to imagine some lone deviant in the Empire trying something as audacious as kidnapping two girls across the border in this situation, but if it was an Emperor trying to abduct two members of his royal bloodline, maybe he would take the risk.

(I don't want to even imagine it, but if for some reason the magic succeeded but the plot was discovered, it would damage relations between the two countries even more. Why is he willing to go so far when he could just have a child by some other way?)

It should be obvious that the children of a noblewoman should be more valuable than the children of a disgraced exile like herself. Even if the Empress can't produce a child for some reason, why not just use a concubine?

(Apart from inheritance rights to the Empire... Do my children have something else he's after?)

No, she can't say for sure. Shirley hadn't seen any change in her daughters using her sight, it's rare but not impossible for people to suddenly tap into huge magical energy stored in the body, after all, it had happened to her.

If her daughters had indeed inherited her traits and also had the blood of the Emperor running through their veins, was that the true reason they were being targeted?

...Even though it makes sense, she can't jump to conclusions.

(It's no use. What can I figure out for sure if all I have is speculation? If I don't know what their true goal is, how can I protect Sophie and Tio at all... No, that's not true.)

If anything, protecting them is the easy part. Just cut down whatever or whoever seeks to do them harm. The real problem is just how to confess to her daughters the truth about their loathsome bloodline.

Whether they live in a common town or were brought up in a castle, that shadow of lineage will always hang over them.

It's only natural for claimants to strike down all threats to their throne when the time whoever ascends could seek to do them harm or even kill them.

Even if they didn't know about their bloodline, it wouldn't make any difference. Shirley thinks it's stupid, but she can't deny that when things come to a head people will only see her daughters in a certain way.

-----Potential royal pawns.

If these fears of hers became fact, it would be hard even for her to protect the two of them. As painful as it is to say, the will of the powerful can move the very earth.

The only way to kill this adventurer would be to crush her physically over and over again until she can't recover. But even if this seems impossible, they only have to overwhelm the white-haired swordswoman for a brief moment to find the opportunity to steal Sophie and Tio away.

"...? Mum, you look pale, are you okay?"

"Ah, don't worry, I'm fine. I'm just a little tired since I have a lot on my mind."

Her anxiety was getting worse day by day, there was no way her daughters wouldn't notice.

She was constantly thinking of some way out of this situation, hoping for a convenient solution from the depths of her heart. But, it was impossible to shape the world to your desires without true power.

In the end, she couldn't reach an answer. After seeing her girls off to school, Shirley went to the Guild's training square.

—She swung her sword, trying to distract herself for a while. Maybe things would change with time, or she might actually think of a way out?

"....."

The tree planted in the middle of the square sways in the wind, its leaves being swept off its branches. As the leaves swirled around her, Shirley created a new sword with alchemy and swung it around her at a speed the naked eye couldn't follow.

Somehow, the number of leaves floating around her seemed to double in that instant. She swung the sword four more times, each time the leaves around her were sliced thinner and thinner.

There is a magical tool where thick pieces of paper can be sliced into two thinner sheets, it's exactly the same principle as what Shirley is doing now.

Even when placed on a desk using the tool requires a great degree of precision, so for Shirley to be doing the same thing to leaves that are dancing on the wind around her and with such speed defies common sense.

"...I'm still distracted."

A clear mind is key to expert swordsmanship. As if to cut out the last distortion plaguing her thoughts, she swung the sword at the last leaf that fell with a diagonal stroke as the wind died down.

But, the leaf wasn't sliced like the rest. It may seem like the sword had become dull, but that's wrong. The sword had bisected the leaf so cleanly that both pieces had fallen to the ground in unison as if they were still part of one whole.

"Fuu... That's good enough."

Dismissing the otherworldly skills she had just demonstrated as 'good enough', Shirley turned her attention towards the square's entrance.

"Were you waiting for me to leave?"

"Y-you knew we were here?"

Hiding behind the doorframe of the entrance which is connected to the building were three familiar young people; Leia, Cudd and Kyle.

"I thought we were being quite stealthy... Did you know we were here from the beginning? Did you sense us or something?"

"I knew from the beginning... Staring at me like that, anyone would notice."

It seems like she knew the whole time. The three of them try to cover up the awkward atmosphere with forced laughs, then Shirley herself changed the subject.

"You're training again today? You three seem to be putting in a lot of effort lately."

"Yeah, sorta. We're going to hunt giant bugs next, we were thinking of maybe asking for your help?"

"Ah... I see."

Shirley's eyes seem a little distant. A giant bug is a novice monster, similar to slimes or goblins.

It doesn't have any magical power or real intelligence, their main defining characteristics are that they're the size of a human being and have a tendency to swarm.

Without the strange properties of a slime or the intelligence of a goblin, it's definitely an easy enemy to defeat, one that Shirley herself fought during her days as a new adventurer.

"By the way... Do you actually know what kind of monster a giant bug is?"

"Umm... I haven't seen it, but isn't it just a big bug? Like an Ogretarantula or something?"

"What kind of strange encounter rate do you have that you're encountering those near here?"

"...Honestly, that's why we were hoping you'd help out next time."

Kyle, who had survived the encounter with the earth dragon at the old fort in the woods and the battle against the goblin queen, was still at rank E even after fighting in the Dragon War. Although, for some reason, even when doing minor jobs like picking herbs, he kept running into monsters that are rank A or B in danger levels.

He seems to have a strange relationship with lady luck, having been both saved by Shirley and running into critically dangerous ogretarantulas that are known to even prey on lesser dragons.

Although it seems there really is some kind of strange story here, Shirley decides to not let the topic get derailed.

"Putting that aside, the main thing to consider against giant bugs is that it's a

battle where you should be using brain over brawn.”

“? I don’t really get it... But we should be fine since we’re always serious when we go on adventures! Except for Cudd.”

“That’s right, I remember you telling me that a moment’s carelessness can mean death, right? We’ve all matured a lot. Except for Leia.”

“Huh?”

“Ahh?”

The two grab the cuff of each other’s shirts and glare at one another, almost in perfect harmony.

“Well, everything’s a learning experience. If you ever get into a seriously dangerous situation, you should also be ready to run, so be prepared for that as well.”

“So, what kind of monster is a giant bug anyway?”

“...Please find that out yourselves.”

“...I was worried about it before, but what’s with those distant eyes?”

She’s thinking about her first encounter with those things ten years ago. To describe them briefly, a giant bug looks like a cockroach that’s roughly the size of a man.

It’s rubbery to the touch and its entire body is pitch black. As much as people hate the smaller sized species that creeps around the kitchen, the large version that scuttles around on six legs at high speed is enough to make even the most robust warrior or serene saint scream.

Because it tends to swarm in narrow caves or sewers, their numbers mixed with their grotesqueness can overwhelm adventurers.

But sometimes, it’s better for adventurers to face the unknown. A lot of people think it’s either goblins or slimes, but as far as Shirley knows these giant bugs are the easiest monsters to deal with so long as you keep your cool, so it’s best for these rookie adventurers to go into the fight expecting a tough opponent rather than going in overconfident.

"Um... Shirley-san."

"What is it?"

"Is it possible that... No, I might just be misunderstanding, but... Is there something wrong?"

At Kyle's unexpected words, Shirley's heart jumped a little.

"...Why do you think that?"

"No, it's just that somehow, when you were training before it seemed like... It seemed like you couldn't concentrate properly until that last swing."

She never expected to be seen through by this boy half her age, so Shirley struggled for an answer.

Were her troubles so obviously reflected on her face? She found herself touching her cheeks with her fingers, but as soon as she realized that had as good as admitted it, she looked away from Kyle towards Cudd and Leia who were still fighting.

"That's right... There have been a few troublesome things lately."

"Is it about your daughters?"

"Yes... If it was just about me, there wouldn't be a problem."

Shirley doesn't want to talk about it and Kyle isn't about to press her. Kyle might not know the full story, but even he can read the atmosphere and knows not to ask more.

(Honestly, it would be so easy if it was just about me.)

If it was just her, she wouldn't worry about what sort of wounds she might take. But, for her daughters, she can't allow that. And when it comes to this case, Shirley feels that if she intervenes dramatically, it could have serious consequences for her daughters.

(No matter what, I have to protect their futures... Yes, no matter what.)

That's what her life is for. It would be nice if what she feared never came to pass, but Shirley is not so naïve anymore.

She had already hardened her resolve to protect her daughter's future above

all else. It was at that time, she heard a slightly embarrassed yet earnest voice from beside her.

"I-if...! If you're ever in trouble... That's right, a request! Put out a request for me!"

"Kyle?"

"N-no, I mean, I'd help you even if you didn't put out a request... I just thought you might be more comfortable with it that way... Regardless, if you ever need my help, just ask! I'll help you any time!"

The Empire... Even though the shadow of her ex-fiancée loomed over Shirley's thoughts, for just a moment she forgot all about it as she looked at Kyle, who was gesturing awkwardly with both his hands as he blushed furiously.

It was a little rude to say so, but she couldn't help but find his ridiculous figure a little funny and Shirley had a slight smile on her face.

"That's right... Things are a little different from the old days."

"Uh... huh? Um, sorry... For saying weird things so suddenly."

"You don't need to apologize."

There's nothing to be sorry for. It was thanks to him that she realized.

(After all, the past is the past. No one was there for me in the Empire, but it's different now.)

She's no longer the lonely young girl who, betrayed, believed she had no choice but to live in despair.

Her feelings were different now, not driven by money or strength, but she almost found herself believing in the romance of adventure when she looked at him.

It made her a little uncomfortable to think that this boy was the one to do it, but somehow, her mood had lifted and she began to see the looming conflict in a new light.

Author's Comment:

Sorry for the nine-day wait, it was a real grind getting this chapter out.

I will be very happy to receive your comments on this chapter as always.

I wanted this chapter to be quietly significant, but next time the story will begin to really be set in motion.

This chapter was hard ('-ω-)'

If you're suffering from Revengewhen-it-is, please consult the chapter listing for spoilers of when you'll receive your dosage.

Also, you may have noticed that the blog got a bit of a makeover! Wow! I actually spent money on this place! What am I doing!?

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Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 31

Gossip – Girls' Growth

Three days after Shirley had learned that the Empire's shadow was looming over her family, she's currently visiting the Adventurer's Guild.

"Shirley-san, I have a letter for you from the guild master."

"....."

"Y-you don't have to look so disgusted with me!"

On the letter was the crossed sword and staff of the adventurer's guild and next to it was the emblem of the girl emblazoned against the dawn, Shirley frowned when she saw the symbol of the Golden Witch.

"...This feels a little too familiar. I ought to just throw this away, I don't really feel like being tricked and mocked right now."

"A-ah, right... I can't deny that I'm ashamed on behalf of the guild for what happened before."

Shirley hadn't forgotten that the last time Canary sent her a letter, she and her daughters ended up snared in a double contract. Even more so because she was forced into something so shameful.

"B-but, if the guild master sent you a letter personally, it has to be something important, right?"

"I suppose? That demon woman doesn't commit idle mischief after all. It's incredibly irritating."

So she said. It's inevitable that any letter that carries both the mark of the adventurer's guild and Canary's own emblem will be important.

She doesn't know just what it is, but it's possible that something on the level of a Dragon King's attack has happened again.

"I'm going to take a look."

"Ah, then I'll use a letter opener..."

"No, don't. There's a possibility there's some kind of curse or trap involved."

"...You've known her for so long, but you really don't trust grandma at all..."

She gazed at the envelope with sapphire and crimson eyes. Shirley opened her eyes wide and used her ability to see 'everything', reading the words on the folded letter inside the envelope.

"Having asked me to mediate, a certain personage of high birth wishes to meet you on the climactic day of the month, at two hours past noon. Whatever they wish to tell you is secret enough I could not write it thus, but I shall leave it up to you whether you wish to meet with them. If you intend to accept this rendezvous, please inform Yumina and she will organize proceedings. The meeting place is the reception room of Adventurer's Guild in your remote little town."

Shirley frowned in suspicion.

It is common for people in high society like nobles to conceal their names when making meeting plans. But, for a meeting like this to happen at such a time... There are only a few people who know the truth about what is targeting her daughters.

What's more, what could be so important that some noble would lower themselves to meeting directly with a commoner? No, she doesn't know if it's an aristocrat or perhaps some high ranking merchant, but either way these

people so pressed for time wouldn't give it up idly.

(In the past, there were a few times where I was approached to be a bodyguard after an escort request.)

They were enamoured with Shirley's martial prowess and wanted to make her a part of their retinue as a personal guard, though she had to decline the offers despite the generous pay since it required always moving around with her client, but she was quite sure that this meeting wasn't about that.

It's impossible to think that the ever self-conceited Canary would let herself be the middleman if it was some sort of business proposal. In the first place, if it was something like that, they could have just sent Shirley the letter without having to use the witch as an intermediary.

(Which means... It's a person so important that even Canary is willing to be a messenger...?)

That narrows things down considerably. Shirley can only think of three people.

One of them is the great unifier of Canary's homeland, the Lord of the Land of Demons. The second is the ruler of the trading nation on the eastern seas where Canary is currently conducting business. And the last person, the one who is most likely considering this is his own backyard.

(Could it be the King?)

The head of the Pendragon family that rules the Kingdom and Canary's close ally... Briefly, an image of the Black Lion King she met at a ball all those years ago flashed through her mind.

(Since he's so close to Canary, it's not strange that he knows I'm in the Kingdom, but why is he suddenly contacting me after ten years? And at a time like this...)

She doesn't understand why the royal family would need Canary to mediate either. However, suddenly contacting her now when the Empire's shadow was attempting to swallow her family whole, it was all too strange.

Now that she thinks about it Grania, the one who managed to pinpoint the

location of the magic's caster, was one of Canary's students herself. It's unlikely, but it's possible things aren't quite as they seem.

(I don't know how this will end up, but I don't have much choice.)

The end of the month was two days away. If there was a chance of proving the Empire's guilt, of getting the full picture, then Shirley would seize that opportunity.

"Alright, it's perfect."

Shirley isn't usually one for self-flattery, but even she felt like she did an excellent job with dinner that day. Sophie and Tio's eyes sparkled when they saw the meat pie baked to a perfect golden-brown colour and the simmering chicken stew laid out on the table.

"Mama, did something happen today? It's so luxurious!"

The meal made from a rented corner of the Deficit House's kitchen, an inn for destitute adventurers to get a night's rest, looked extravagant considering the atmosphere of the dining room they sat in.

Usually, she cooks modest dishes based on bread or salads, but today she went all out and made both her daughters' respective favourite dishes.

"Did something good happen?"

"...No, I simply felt like it. There wasn't any reason in particular."

She really did just feel like it. Cooking two meals like this takes a lot of effort, but it's a labour of love and getting to spend quality time with her daughters over dinner is pure bliss for Shirley.

(It's possible we won't get many opportunities to spend time as a family soon...)

It's still just her fears for now... But it's completely possible that Sophie and Tio could be swept up in the entanglements of power and politics.

Of course, Shirley wouldn't just sit by. For the future of her daughters, she would make enemies out of entire nations.

So, this is her way of making amends. Amends for the nights without her

these girls may soon have to endure, with the uncertain waters they're soon to sail.

"Now, it won't do to let it go cold. Let's eat."

"Thanks for the food!"

Sophie scooped as much of the stew as she could on her spoon and Tio dug into the pie with her fork. When Shirley saw their faces light up as they took their first bite, Shirley sighed happily.

Even if she doesn't know what her enemies are truly after, so long as she can protect this peace, then she has nothing to fear. Even if her meeting with that noble visitor doesn't pan out, she knows that she isn't alone either.

The strength that exists in the bonds between people, it was something she had learned in this remote town.

"Ahhh that was tasty! Thank you!"

"Yes, I'm glad you liked it. Remember to brush your teeth properly."

"Mm."

The twins polished off their plates and went back upstairs. They've become familiar figures for adventurers who pass them by in the hallways.

"I'm feeling sleepy because I ate so much, I wonder if I should lie down?"

"Mm. You're going to get fat if you do that though."

When Tio said that expressionlessly, Sophie stopped in her tracks.

"W-what are you saying...? I-I'm actually not sleepy, not sleepy at all okay?"

"Okay?"

Sophie is actually slightly thinner than most girls and probably doesn't really have to worry about putting on weight, but she's at that age. The mere mention of gaining weight was enough to blow the cobwebs away.

"A-anyways, you're not one to talk Tio! You're always sleeping after you eat, even if you're good at exercising aren't you being careless?"

"It's okay. I've got an extra place to store nutrition."

"What are you talking abou———"

She started to say, then she trailed off. To any bystander Tio's figure seems to be easy to figure out in her sometimes shabby way of dressing, but Sophie noticed something strange.

"T-Tio...? A-are those...?"

"Mm. They started growing from the beginning of the year."

She hadn't realized that the person she spent every day with had changed so slowly, but despite her chest being small... Those bumps were definitely larger than the nothingness on Sophie's chest.

"It feels kind of weird when I'm swinging a stick around, but maybe now mum will buy me a bra."

"W-what!? B-but I was told by the shop person I didn't need it yet!?"

When they got measured at school this year she was one centimeter taller than Tio and she felt like her arms and legs were getting longer as well, Sophie was beginning to think more and more that 'now I'm beginning to look like an older sister'.

But, reality is a harsh mistress. She couldn't have ever imagined that her little sister would overtake her like this.

"Why... Why...! Why are you getting ahead of me, even though we should both be inheriting it from mama!"

Sophie completely forgot about her slight height advantage as she struggled to recover from the shock of this new discovery.

Of course, the merits of chest size vary from person to person, but when it comes to this girl she always saw breasts as a measure of maturity.

This was just too much of a shock, the pride she had been building up as an older sister since that measurement at school was collapsing around her ears.

"Don't worry."

"Tio...?"

Tio put a hand on the slumped shoulders of her older sister.

"We're just children, it's good to be patient. Besides, height and chest size aren't everything."

"I know you're trying to cheer me up, but it's not helping at all!?"

Whilst Sophie pride as the elder sister had all but evaporated and Tio was beginning to get worried about her,

"Y-You children...!"

How can you talk about something like that in the hallway!? Having heard the conversation all the way from the dining room, Shirley covered up her embarrassed face with her hands.

Living in a town like this and spending every day in such a vibrant inn and school, Shirley was worried that their surroundings were beginning to rub off on them if they can talk about things like that so openly, without a hint of modesty.

(I've got to work even harder from now on.)

No matter what anxieties she has about the future, right now she has to teach her girls how to act like proper ladies, lest they draw the eyes of lechers.

She dashed off in pursuit of her girls, sending overwhelming bloodlust towards anyone who dared look in their direction.

Hope my copy of Volume 1 arrives in a few days, it comes out in Japan tomorrow. I'll take pictures but I probably won't be doing any scans.

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 32

A Royal Meeting

A man stood in the plains outside of a certain town in the Kingdom.

Using his binoculars, the man looked towards the settlement that the woman who once saved his life now lived in, but it was a benefactor that he had also turned his back on once before in her hour of direst need.

A woman so beautiful, he would never see her equal again so long as he lived. White hair like snow, two eyes that twinkled like gems and a fantastical body, he had admired all of it.

Even though his true feelings had never come to the fore, it had been his life's joy to serve such a woman.

How long had it been? How long had he held feelings for his benefactor despite her disinterest?

The ideal he held of her had been shattered when the allegations of her torturing her little sister were brought to light, at the time he couldn't see her in the way he had before.

When she later escaped from prison, he was one of the first to join the search parties. He was determined to catch her and put an end to everything, but

despite his determination, she was nowhere to be found and eventually the search ceased.

"When it turned out that everything had been a misunderstanding, I fell into despair."

There had been a huge misunderstanding. Both she and her younger sister had both been victims, left to the cruel mercy of fate. He was disgusted in himself for ever having lost faith in her, but fortunately, she's still alive.

If he pursues the order from his current lord, she should appear before him. He might be able to live by her side once again.

He'll solve all the misunderstandings and they can live together as two people in love should, those are that man's desperate hopes.

"Please wait just a little longer, Shirley-sama. I shall meet you soon."

Whilst holding such a selfish desire close to his heart, the man gazed at the building where a number of children could be seen playing in the yard.

—

It was the end of the month. On that spring afternoon, Shirley could see a clear blue sky and the cries of cicadas through the open window of the Adventurer's Guild reception room.

According to Canary, there were four high ranking people who wished to visit her. As expected, she had heard the story of the magic caster's identity from Grania and the talks are to be about Sophie and Tio.

"....."

"...Shirley-san, would you like some tea?"

"No, thank you."

"I-I see..."

This is bad. That feeling fills Yumina's heart.

The intimidating pressure that flowed from the swordswoman who had arrived 15 minutes before the meeting time had slowly filled the room. Although she's not particularly angry, she's aware that she is going to be

meeting with royalty, a breed of people Shirley didn't think too fondly of considering her past experiences.

Especially when she considers that it may have been a person she was previously acquainted with back in the Empire.

Usually, any correspondence she receives from Yumina always entails misfortune, but since this entire thing was set up by Canary she's even more wary than usual.

"Hoh? You've already arrived."

'Please show up soon, Grandma' was what Yumina was wishing from the depths of her heart and, as if reading her mind, Canary strode into the room with her golden hair flowing behind her.

"How you been... Is that what the young people say now, right? You look healthy."

"That's true enough. You look a little worse for wear."

"So you say? If it's true that I'm not at my best, then that is a loss for the world itself."

As Canary said such a line with a theatrical tone of voice, Yumina and Shirley stared at her with cold eyes.

((Rather, wouldn't the world become a paradise if you were just bedridden forever?))

Canary's mischief-making has been the same as ever. The two of them had just heard a story that three weeks ago, after being insulted by a cardinal from the Theocracy, she had destroyed the estate where he kept all of his fineries and smashed the stained glass windows of his cathedral into a thousand pieces.

Moreover, they don't know just what kind of trickery she used, but for some reason, the Theocracy wasn't able to pin the crime on Canary. Coercion behind the scenes...? Whatever the case, she got away with it.

"Now now, don't look at me like that."

"Agreed. Personally, I enjoy hearing tales of Canary's escapades, they're all quite novel."

Following behind Canary was a man in the prime of his life, with a dignified yet enigmatically handsome face framed with black hair and a beard as if he wore the mane of a lion, behind him was a woman with beautiful silver hair that was not overshadowed by him at all.

Yumina's back stiffened straight away as she saw him and Shirley was about to stand up from the sofa, but she was motioned to stay by the man's hand.

"It's fine. I am merely here covertly on my day off. You need not stand on ceremony, I am merely just another guest."

"That's right. Moreover, I am delighted to meet with you, our Kingdom's hero."

They came here just like any other citizen, so they don't want to cause an uproar. After explaining that to Shirley the King and Queen of the nation, Edward and Alicia Pendragon, sat in the sofa opposite to her and smiled.

"Yumina, sensitive matters will be discussed."

"Ah... Then, I'll take my leave."

Canary whispered into Yumina's ear and Shirley waited until she had left the room before she spoke.

"This is something you don't want others to hear?"

"Well, it's that kind of thing."

The involvement of the Empire has become apparent to the royal family. What is discussed here could become a matter of national security, so it's better that as few people as possible hear it, hence why Yumina was asked to leave the room.

"...Well, it has been some time. I've heard all about your valiant efforts. You truly delivered us from destruction when you defeated the dragon king. As both a monarch and a citizen, I am eternally grateful."

"I too wish to extend my gratitude. Truly... I did not think the chance to meet you again would ever come."

"...That's right. I confess that I didn't think we'd ever meet again either."

Since everyone here knows about Shirley's circumstances, talks should proceed smoothly.

"I am pleased to see that Your Majesties are still well, it having been such a long time since our last meeting."

"I'm glad to see you well also. I've heard it from Canary that you became a semi-immortal since we last met and indeed it's like you haven't aged a day... Rather, you've only become more beautiful."

From the beginning, Shirley had never been good at expressing herself without words. So although she maintained an air of wariness, the King and Queen celebrated their reunion happily without concern.

"I still remember it now. Whenever I visited the Empire, Empress Elizabeth and yourself would always be hosting some sort of tea party."

"Heh... Kukuku. The idea of Shirley attending anything so elegant as a tea party is hilario-GEH!?"

SMACK! With a loud sound, a strong blow hits the back of Canary's neck.

Shirley knows that she's built an image of a sword demon who leaves behind nothing but a mist of red on the battlefields she fights on, with those days of tea parties and balls in her past long behind her, but for some reason, she still finds Canary's laughter irritating.

"It does not do to laugh, Canary. If you adorned her once again in finery, she would not look out of place in any gala even today?"

"That's right. Would you like to join my next tea party? I'd be ever so happy if you could attend."

"No... Because of my circumstances, I'll have to decline."

Alicia understood and withdrew the offer with a smile. Although Shirley had changed so much, the Queen acted just like she had in the old days.

Remembering back, this couple had always been rather hard to pin down in a conversation, she always struggled to keep a distance of respectability because of how friendly they were to her.

The Queen is not a bad person at all, but it's rather hard to deal with royalty

who will earnestly invite a normal citizen to a tea party for high society so casually. Honestly, she really hasn't changed at all.

Moreover, although Edward has matured well, he has definitely aged. Why is it that time around Alicia alone has frozen?

She should be at least forty years old, but she looks like she's in her twenties. It's all too strange, even if she uses the beauty products marketed by Canary, who fainted after being smacked in the neck by the woman who sat next to her.

"So, what about the other two? They haven't arrived yet?"

She feels that if she doesn't change the subject, she wouldn't be able to stop herself from asking after the Queen's secret. It's only 5 minutes until 2 PM; it's almost the promised time and yet there's no sign of the other two having arrived.

"Ah, my mistake, I was wrapped up in our conversation. Canary."

"I understand... Oww, my neck."

Rubbing the back of her neck with her fingers, she clicked the digits on her other hand. It's the forte of the Golden Witch, spatial magic.

"I will tell you now, but please do not raise a fuss when you see our guest. It would be dangerous... For multiple reasons."

As golden magical energy streaked through the room, two beautiful girls seemed to step out of thin air. They both bore a different kind of youthful feeling than Shirley and Canary, the red-haired knight with the innocently curious expression and the familiar looking princess with blonde hair and sky blue eyes.

"You..."

"...It has been some time. Shirley-sama."

The Imperial Princess, Philia Ragdoll. She didn't say the name aloud. The reason she didn't draw a sword wasn't self-control, but because she was still in shock.

Whilst Sophie and Tio were under threat of kidnapping from the Empire, a member of the Imperial family suddenly dared to appear in front of her. It

would be strange if she wasn't shocked.

"...I would like you to hear what I have to say."

Suppressing the nostalgic and shameful feelings that welled up when she looked at Shirley, Philia sat in a seat prepared for her, Lumiliana standing behind.

"Honestly, I know I'll hate the answer, but... Why are my daughters being targeted by Imperial magi?"

Philia's face seemed truly regretful as Shirley glared at her, but she managed to summon her courage and answer resolutely.

"I will be frank. His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Albert Ragdoll, learned of the existence of his daughters and plans to bring them back to the Empire, to create an Imperial heir."

"...Why would he need to do such a thing? From the perspective of the Empire, wouldn't it be strange for the children of a criminal to succeed the Imperial throne?"

When Shirley so assertively referred to herself as a criminal, tears welled up in Philia's eyes for just a moment, but she blinked them back and looked at the differing coloured eyes before her.

"As it stands, the Emperor only has two children. That woman... I mean, Empress Alice has a condition that leaves her unable to conceive."

"Alice... So she really became the Empress after all?"

She remembered the younger sister who once made her daily life a living hell. By the time Shirley had settled into the town and the guild, relations between the Empire and the Kingdom had soured leading to a lack of flowing information and trade between the two countries, but Shirley wasn't surprised that Alice ended up marrying Albert.

"Can't he just make do with some noblewoman, then? Even if it's a concubine, it shouldn't be an issue so long as she bears him a successor, right?"

"That's... Whenever such a thing is brought up with the Emperor, he doesn't listen and proclaims his sincere love for Alice, refusing to sleep with any other

woman."

He talks about sincere love and fidelity after cheating on his fiancée with her younger sister? Apart from Canary, everyone has an expression of utter speechlessness, Philia continues despite the feeling of shame in her heart.

"Once he learned about the existence of your children, he decided to take them in order to quash the criticism directed at Empress Alice."

"...For something so stupid, he's going to rob my daughters of their future?"

At the low and rumbling voice that seemed to resonate from the very depths of hell, Philia flinched and Lumiliana began to reach for the hilt of her sword but stopped when Edward raised his hand.

"I can assure you that her words are the truth. Indeed I've received word from my own sources within the Empire, moreover, the country itself is under enormous strain in no small part thanks to that Empress herself."

"That's not the only strange thing that's going on. Why did she have to come here...? Unless that's something you cannot answer."

To be honest, Shirley doesn't really care. The only thing that matters to her is how the people in front of her intend to act on this information.

"I... I will return to the Capital and beseech His Majesty to desist. The crimes already committed cannot be undone, but at the very least I hope to stop him before it's too late."

"I know you must be worried about your daughters being turned into political pawns, but I have no intention of meddling in the family affairs of someone who has done so much for our nation. Please rest at ease."

So he said, but putting Edward aside, Shirley can't so easily trust Philia. Since he is so close with Canary and it was on her word that this meeting was decided he is likely telling the truth, but the Empire... She's not so readily able to trust a member of the Imperial family.

"I am not so conceited to think that I can convince you today, but I wish to say one more thing."

Whether or not she knows just how suspicious Shirley's gaze is, the princess

spoke clearly without looking away.

"It exposes the true shame of my house, but although my brother may be a fool, the Empress is a true parasite that sucks the lifeblood of the country."

"Ho ho, to say such a thing so openly."

Canary cackled heartily. For Shirley, watching a girl that she last saw when she was such a young girl denounce her family like that made a strange feeling well up in her heart.

"Although I have not yet decided on the means, I will gather evidence that magicians were hired. Perhaps it might be possible to interrogate the casters themselves and have them confess, but in the meantime, please do take care."

Double release Sunday btw (no, this isn't going to be a thing).

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 33

Just in Time

“Pardon me, there’s an emergency, so I’ll be excusing myself.”

Pweeeeeee, pweeeeeee, such a strange sound rang from the pocket watch that Shirley had stored in her bosom.

She stood from the sofa and, after bowing her head quickly to the assembled royalty in the room, pressed a button on the pocket watch and disappeared as if she were never there in the first place.

Whenever Shirley partied with other adventurers, she made one condition absolutely crystal clear to them.

—“No matter what sort of situation we’re in, there’s the possibility I might have to leave the party temporarily without warning, is that fine?”

Many adventurers were confused when she said that, but after thinking about it for a while they agreed. It makes sense, after all, considering who the Demonic White Sword was.

—“Well, although the people in town can be crude at times, the Kingdom’s law still applies and there haven’t been any incidents yet. So it’s quite unlikely that it will happen. You shouldn’t expect me to suddenly disappear.”

She had received many party invitations since the Dragon War and Shirley was able to deepen her bonds with the adventurers in the town, but she always held fast to that golden rule.

“Um... Where did my sis-I mean, Shirley-sama go?”

Philia stood shocked when Shirley left the guild, as did everyone else present, except for Canary. She hadn't simply become invisible or something like that, she really had disappeared.

That pocket watch might be some kind of magical tool, but as far as Philia and Lumiliana know there's no such tool in the Empire that can instantly teleport people.

The two who came from the Empire shuddered at the thought of such powerful magic, but Edward who was somewhat more familiar turned to Canary.

“Was that a spatial magic tool that you created? Just where exactly has she gone?”

“Someplace in this town.”

“She said there was an emergency... Is there some kind of incident going on in town!?”

“Incident, you say? I suppose that for Shirley, this would be a rather big incident. You see...”

Canary laughed, then spoke a sentence no one present really understood.

“That thing is, how should I say it, something like a safety alarm.”

—

Before this all happened.

As bell for the end of the day rang, throngs of noisy children poured out the front gate of the school and started to make their way home.

The boys who run off to play with their friends and the girls who diligently go home to study, although both have different circumstances and plans the thing that binds them all together as they walk home and chat is that they've been

released from the clutches of the school day.

"Mmmm—! School's finally oveeeeer..."

"It doesn't really feel like it since we have homework."

"Mm, I agree. All the homework in the world should be destroyed."

The two girls that stood out with their white hair, Sophie and Tio, were walking home along with their three friends.

Chelsea who walked next to Tio immediately agreed with her, walking next to them was Lisa, a tall girl who was arching her back as if tired.

"Umm, can we not even talk about homework? Do you remember how much homework we got during vacation last summer? What are we going to do if it's that bad again?"

"Ahaha... You three really had a hard time during summer."

Walking next to Sophie was Mira, the girl with the rare black hair and black eyes, who smiled wryly as she remembered how much the other three girls struggled last summer.

"But, you know..."

"I want to play when we have days off..."

"Isn't it weird that they make us study even on our days off?"

"It's because you have a day off that you shouldn't forget to study."

Two diligent students and three lackadaisies. Although there seems to be a bit of an imbalance, these five girls have been friends since they started school.

Despite being so young, Sophie and Tio's looks catch the eye of anyone who sees them. Usually, you'd expect this to earn them the ugly envy of every girl in the school, but because the boys are kept at bay and they're so easily likeable, it seems that their relationships with the girls in class have only deepened.

"...Well, you should at least try to get your homework done for tomorrow. By the way, what are you three doing today?"

"Ah, my dad wanted me to help in the shop today... Even if I didn't have homework, I have no freedom..."

"My bro is coming back from adventuring today and he'll probably be all tired, so I guess I have to take care of the younger kids."

"My brother is also returning today. Father and mother are at work, so I'll have to prepare dinner."

"Oh, okay."

She was hoping to invite them around to play, but since Lisa's family runs a tavern and Chelsea helps out at the orphanage she lives in, there are times like this when they're busy.

"By the way, are Chelsea and Mira's brothers in the same adventurer party?"

"I think so? I've never met her bro though."

"Maybe they were in Shirley-san's party? Since they're in the same guild."

"Ahaha! I don't think so? There was that time she said she was going to join a party not that long ago, but mama always prefers to adventure by herself."

As Sophie said that, Chelsea started off a sentence with 'that reminds me',

"My bro recently told me about an adventurer in his party... What did he say again? Some weird person? In any case, it was a strange story."

"...Mum said something like this before, but sometimes parties don't always work out."

"Yeah... I hope nothing happens."

They gossiped about their family, their hobbies and their other classmates. As they swapped topics between classes and teachers and things coming up later in the year, one by one the group got smaller as the girls peeled off in different directions until only Sophie and Tio were left.

"Mm?"

When they were almost back to the Deficit House, talking about whether they should play or do homework when they got back, they saw a single gold coin rolled out from a side alley.

"What's a gold coin doing here?"

"Did someone lose it?"

Thinking like that, someone with common decency would always think of returning it to its owner. They picked it up and walked into the alley to find its owner and as they did they saw a man with fine black hair, dressed head to toe in magnificently tailored similarly coloured clothing.

"Um... Did this belong to you, mister?"

"Yes, that's right. Thank you very much for returning it to me... To tell the truth, I feared that I wouldn't have the opportunity to talk privately with the two of you in a town filled with such barbarity."

"...? What do you mean...?"

The man who looked to be in his late twenties with a fairly handsome face and, although the twins had never seen him before, he swept his coat tails aside and knelt down on one knee, looking up at them earnestly.

"I have come to retrieve you, Your Highness, Crown Princess Sophilea. And Your Highness, Princess Tionissia.

".....Who?" "

Sophie and Tio are completely confused as the smiling man addressed them with names they had never heard before.

"This is the first time I've had the pleasure of meeting you. My name is Leblanc, I am in the service of Her Imperial Highness, Empress Alice. From this day forth, I hope we can be sincere acquaintances."

It was Sophie who reacted first to the word 'Empire'. They had been taught at school that it was the largest nation on the continent, laying to the north of the Kingdom and that it was hostile to the smaller nation.

"...I think you've got the wrong people. Those aren't our names."

"It is only natural that you be confused. You grew up in the cradle of humility, surrounded by such crude and lowborn adventurers from birth."

Leblanc continues on at such a tempo it's doubtful he really heard what Sophie said at all.

"However, the blood of the noblest lineage in the world runs through your veins. I endeavour to retrieve you at the behest of your father, His Majesty the

Emperor, as well as your aunt, Her Majesty Empress Alice.”

“N-no, I don’t understand... Why does an Emperor want with us!? We don’t want to go anywhere, this town is our home!”

Both of them didn’t understand what Leblanc was saying at all. However, they have an unmistakable feeling that something is deeply wrong and they started to back away.

“Have you not heard from your mother, Shirley-sama? You are the only two daughters conceived between Shirley-sama, the eldest daughter of the powerful Earlgrey house and His Imperial Majesty Emperor Albert?”

“...Huh?”

At the sudden reveal of their father’s name, Sophie and Tio stopped dead in their tracks.

————Hey, do we have a dad, or a grandad and grandma?

The two had once asked their mother that. When they did, their mother looked like she was about to burst into tears and hugged the two of them tightly without saying a word.

After that, the twins had never asked again. If their father could make that strong mother of theirs so upset with just a mention of him, then they don’t care to know him at all.

“As a result of a tragic misunderstanding, Shirley-sama left the Empire and is now taking up such base work as an adventurer in the Kingdom.”

Leblanc spoke as if he knew all about them.

“But, that ends today. It is time for you to return to where you truly belong. Now, let’s go home.”

The devil’s hand reached out to them. Even if she couldn’t keep up with the situation, Tio instinctively knew to resist and smacked Leblanc’s hand away strongly.

“...We’re children of an adventurer and grew up in a town of adventurers. I don’t know anything about an Empire.”

The twins turned around and ran away as fast as they could. But as soon as Leblanc saw that, he sighed and clapped his hands together twice.

"I did not wish to be rough, but I'm left with little choice... Apprehend the Imperial princesses!"

Five men rounded the corner from the main street and blocked Sophie and Tio's escape. Stuck between a rock and a hard place the two young girls have nowhere to go and are easily lifted off their feet.

"S-stop! Let me go!"

"Guh...!"

They swung their fists and kicked with all their might, but it was impossible for such young children to do anything against adult men.

"Don't worry. Eventually, you'll both deeply appreciate the work I went through to retrieve you. Because as they say, families should stick together."

Magic sigils slowly began to form in the palms of Leblanc's hands. Despite not knowing exactly what kind of magic he was about to cast, Sophie instinctually knew that it was something she desperately didn't want and shut her eyes tightly as if trying to escape it.

"Wha!? Who the hell is this kid!?"

At that moment, Sophie and Tio heard a yell, then as the sounds of two loud thwacks echoing through the alleyway, they suddenly felt themselves falling to the ground. But just before they hit the pavement, landed in the arms of a boy who looked like he was just on the verge of adulthood.

"Um, you guys are Shirley-san's daughters, right? These guys seemed like baddies so I kind of just got involved, but what exactly is going on here?"

That boy... the young adventurer Kyle who had no idea what was happening stood opposed to Leblanc, who muttered a curse under his breath.

Since Volume 1 came out today in Japan, I thought I'd do a double release to

celebrate.

Remember that if you enjoy this story, feel free to support the author by buying a copy. If you don't want to pay shipping costs, I get that (it's damn pricey), but you can always buy the epub version instead.

Even Though I'm a Former Noble and a Single Mother, My Daughters are too Cute and Working as an Adventurer Isn't Too Much of a Hassle – 34

The Fury of the Sword Demon

Time flows back even farther.

“...This is the worst.”

“...I wanna cry.”

“...I need to take a bath, right now.”

Cudd, Kyle and Leia looked like hell as they trudged back through the town gates, ghastly expressions on their faces.

The rookie adventuring party had tried to take on their first ever monster subjugation request together without the veteran adventurer at their side, but a terrible surprise had awaited them.

“Ahhh, this is the pits! I didn’t think that killing giant bugs would be so hard!”

“You were sitting in the back, right? We had to fight with those things barehanded, it got so bad that Kyle in the front looked like he lost his mind.”

“No, I was still all there? I was just trying to pretend I was somewhere else.”

They had received a request from a city midway between this remote town and the capital to exterminate giant bugs that had made a nest in their sewer

system.

But, when they traversed those dark and cavernous sewers with the aid of the illumination magic 《Flash》, they encountered dozens of monsters in the form of cockroaches the size of men.

“Ahhh... Make it stop. Every time I close my eyes I can see their antenna wiggling about...”

“Shut up, you’re going to make me remember it... Uuuu, goosebumps...!”

Those two who quarrel day in and day out seem much quieter right now.

They had trained on their teamwork in preparation for this request but it didn’t end up mattering at all, those three E-Ranked adventurers had seen a vision of hell in those dimly lit sewers.

It was Leia who had screamed out in terror first, as she saw the cockroaches scuttling along the floors, walls and ceiling towards them.

“In the end, Shirley-san really is Shirley-san. She should have at least said something.”

“Hey, isn’t Shirley-san our friend?”

“It’s thanks to her that we got covered in cockroach fluids.”

In a place where a normal person would have cried out and run for their lives, these three had somehow managed to endure and in a way, they took another path down the road to becoming full-fledged adventurers.

But, they paid a heavy price. Early in the fight, Kyle’s magic through use 《Fireball》and Leia’s runic arrows had been completely exhausted trying to keep the cockroaches at bay, as had Cudd’s magic through the use of his earthen barriers. There was no time to drink a potion either, as the bugs were all over them...

“I really didn’t think the day would come where I’d have to smash a giant cockroach with my bare hands.”

“I know... Did you see when I had to tear off one’s head?”

“Stoop! Can we please stop talking about this!?”

They must have begun to lose it a little because of their exhaustion, as Leia turned around and shouted at the two boys who recalled those horrors with weird laughs.

The disgusting feeling of what they were hacking and smashing had been transmitted through their weapons. Filthy blood and liquid had splattered everywhere. Because the blood and gore had slid down their weapons onto their hands, not to mention the times they'd had to grapple directly with the creatures, the feeling of disgust still felt vivid.

Even though they desperately tried to give themselves space to replenish their magic with potions, there were just too many enemies and close quarters fighting was inevitable.

It's hard to judge just how fortunate they were as a party because these bugs weren't particularly well armoured and could be easily pierced and caved in with their weapons, but in turn, they covered them in viscous body fluids as they expired.

"Anyways, I'm gonna go home and take a bath! I'm not coming out until I'm soaped up head to toe!"

At Leia's anguished cry, Cudd and Kyle nodded silent agreement.

Of course, the three of them had tried to wash themselves in the creek that ran beside the road, but it was nowhere near enough. So, their number one priority right now is bathtime.

"Then, I'm heading off."

"Later..."

"See you tomorrow."

Kyle separated from the two of them on his way home. As he trudged home towards the orphanage where he lived, looking through the windows of the various equipment and weapon shops along the way wandering about how much he needed to restock on, he spotted five big looking men entering a back alley.

(Adventurers...? No, they look way too clean cut...)

He had a bad feeling... If he'd told some other person about this, they'd be wondering what he was so worried about.

But the scene caught Kyle's attention because he knows that back alley doesn't lead anywhere.

(Is there something going on there...?)

It was only curiosity that drove Kyle's feet. The moment he stepped into the alleyway, he heard something that set his inner adventurer alarm bells ringing.

"N-Nooo! Let me go!"

"Ku...!"

It was the cries of two familiar sounding girls. A horrible feeling gripped his chest and he sprinted towards those voices, as he got closer he saw that two white-haired girls were being held in the air by two of those five burly men, whilst a sixth man he hadn't seen before in well-tailored clothes was casting some kind of magic towards them.

His reasoning disappeared and instinct kicked in. Something flicked inside Kyle and he realized that he would risk his life to save those two girls... He barreled towards those two men who were holding Sophie and Tio and flattened them both with punches strengthened with 《Physical Boost》.

"Um, you guys are Shirley-san's daughters, right? These guys seemed like baddies so I kind of just got involved, but what exactly is going on here?"

And so, the story resumes.

Although he had jumped in between the girls and those six suspicious men who had surrounded them, throwing punches as he did so, he really had no idea what was going on at all.

"Who on earth are you? Outsiders who don't know anything would do well not to interrupt. And what's more, you assault a knight whose life is pledged to the Emperor's service... I believe you deserve a suitable punishment?"

"Eh? E-Emperor?"

Did he understand absolutely nothing despite what he had said? Rudolph Leblanc gazed at the foolish boy in front of him.

Kyle, on the other hand, was still at a loss. He could sort of guess that this had something to do with the neighbouring country that there had been a lot of tensions with lately, but he had no idea what this all had to do with the twins.

"...I mean, aren't you guys just kidnapping?"

"Insolence! You dare mock knights of the Empire?"

"Eh? Ah, um, s-sorry."

He had accidentally said what he was thinking... And covered up his mouth with his hand quickly. Now that he's calmed down from his entrance he's a little afraid of the men now surrounding him, but he then realized that the girls he held were trembling in his arms.

Even if they're the children of the Demonic White Sword, they're only ten-year-old girls. Just like he had always stood up for the younger kids at the orphanage, Kyle decided to be the shield for those two, cursing himself for ever having felt fear.

Seeing the boy glaring at him like that, Rudolph only sighed as if dealing with an unruly child and motioned for the knights to hold back for a moment with his hand.

"Are you sure about this? These two people are supposed to come with us at the behest of Their Majesties Emperor and Empress Albert and Alice. Are you truly aware of how severe a crime it is for a commoner from such a backwater country to interfere?"

"W-we aren't princesses of the empire! No matter what you say, this town is our home!"

"P-princesses!?"

Another ridiculous word is thrown out and Kyle is back to square one. Sophie and Tio are princesses? And the Emperor wants to retrieve them? That's what it seems like is going on judging by the flow of the conversation, but Kyle can't keep up at all.

"I advise you to let the princesses return to their home country, I will not hesitate to treat you as a heinous felon should you interfere any more than this."

If you understand, then abscond. I will even be willing to overlook your assault of one of my honourable knights as a ‘misunderstanding’.”

“Uu...”

Sophie looked at Kyle nervously, whilst Tio looked around the back that shielded them to glare at Rudolph.

But somehow, ‘I have to punish these guys after all’ was the first thing that came to Kyle’s mind. If what they’re saying is true and this is a matter at the national level, then there’s not much Kyle can do as a single adventurer. If he resisted, he might be hauled away as a criminal.

When faced with a real crisis, the measure of a man is tested. Whether or not you have the mettle to grasp your own future, will you take that step forward?

The young and inexperienced stood up, frozen on the spot with one of his feet snaking backwards as if intending to run.

“....《Barrier▪Expansion》”

Nevertheless, despite the trembling in his limbs, his answer to the question was to put a barrier between them and the men that threatened the girls.

It was 《Force Field》, the first type of barrier spell he had learned from Asterios. Even though the barrier was so poor it would have made his teacher sigh in frustration, right now it was a symbol of Kyle’s resolve.

“What is the meaning of this? Did I not just say that interfering any more than you already have would be a crime?”

“No, I get that. It’s just that after hearing all that, I might be afraid, but I can’t do anything about that.”

Kyle was going through hell today. First, it was the giant bugs, now it was this crazy situation.

Were the words he was about to speak true? He doesn’t really know anymore. His voice trembled with uncertainty at just what he was plunging himself into, at just what risk he was about to take.

“But... I’m even more scared of seeing the person I love cry... Oh, I said it...”

If he ran from here, he would never be able to face her again. Not being able to repay her for saving his life, that was a prospect far scarier than those fearful memories of the goblin nest she had saved him from in the first place.

His legs had stopped shaking and his arms had stopped trembling, right now he was upset because he ruined his cool line with a bout of embarrassment, that was the present Kyle.

Not lying to himself anymore, he felt larger than life and poured all of his energy into the barrier that separated the twins from the rest of the men in the alleyway.

“You two! Get out of he-!”

“Don’t let them escape! Smash this barrier and retrieve the princesses!”

“《Wind・Let the Air Scythe Through My Foes》!”

“《Water・Let Bullets Wash Through My Foes》!”

“《Hellfire・Reduce My Foe to Ash》 !”

“《Earth・Become a Lance to Pierce My Foe》!”

“《Lightning・Penetrate My Foe》!”

Five different magics are suddenly unleashed towards the barrier with a roar.

“Guh, Ugh... Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!”

Against magic that Asterios would have intercepted with little difficulty, Kyle’s barrier is on the verge of collapsing.

He’s pouring all the magical energy he can into it to repair it, but at the rate things are going it probably won’t even last for another ten seconds.

(With all this going on and no one has come to look...!? Did they use some kind of《Silent Field》in advance...!?)

If people had come to investigate when the twins had screamed, it would have been troublesome. If it wasn’t obvious enough already, using silence magic to block off sound escaping the alleyway, these guys were absolutely up to no good. Kyle only understood that thanks to intuition, but without trying to take time to analyze the situation anymore he twisted his neck around and

yelled at the twins who were still standing behind him.

“Run to Shirley-san! Hurry!!”

No matter how strong the foes he faces are, he'll always be on Shirley's side.

In that way, the best thing for him to do is hold these enemies off so that those two can escape.

“Umm, uh, mama is... That's it! Tio, use that!”

“Mm....! I got it...!”

As Kyle had to turn his attention back to the barrier, Sophie and Tio pulled a pocket watch out of one of their school bags.

“Guaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!”

At the same time, Kyle's barrier shattered and all the magic smashed into him at once. Tramping over him as he fell, one of the knights raced towards the girls and just as he was about to lay hands on her, Tio pressed the winding stem atop the pocket watch.

“Disappear.”

At that moment, a white-haired woman suddenly appeared before the men, as if summoned from thin air. As the men stood dumbfounded at the demonic figure that had suddenly appeared before them... Shirley seemed to move for only an instant.

“...Eh?”

Rudolph who had been stunned by her sudden appearance is even more confused when the five knights suddenly disappeared from his sight.

The next thing he hears is the sounds of heavy thuds, one after another. He could hear things falling hard on the tiles of the roofs above them.

Looking at Shirley all he could see was a scabbard clasped in her hand, Rudolph had no idea what had just happened, but Kyle who was beginning to get used to Shirley's speed from their training understood.

(She launched them all with the sheath of her sword... Faster than sound...!)

It was divine speed. After making such an exceptional strike, Shirley turned

and knelt in front of her daughters with the face of a worried mother.

“Sophie, Tio, are you okay?”

“Uuu... M-mama!”

“...Uuu!”

They had been incredibly brave for ten-year-old girls, but the whole ordeal must have still been traumatizing. As those girls tried to hold back the tears behind their blue and red eyes, they hugged their mother tightly and Shirley stroked their backs gently.

“Ah... Oh... If it isn’t Shirley-sama!? It is I, Rudolph, who had the esteemed honour of being your servant all that time ago! By the way, where exactly are the knights who accompanied me...?”

But, there’s still one man who can’t read the air. Shirley stood up and didn’t even glance at Rudolph as she looked down apologetically at Kyle, who lay on the ground.

“I’m so sorry... That you got caught up in all this.”

“Ow ow ow ow. I... I’m fine, really. But...”

“You don’t need to explain anything right now... I know I’m imposing on you, but could you please look after my daughters for a while?”

As Kyle slowly rose to his feet, Shirley walked past him and drew the most powerful swords she owned from the Hero’s Toolbox.

The blue sword engraved with the emblem of the King of Beasts, 《Blue Citadel of the Country Ig-Alima》, and the red sword bearing the sign of the King of Birds, 《Red Fortress of the Faith Sul-Sagana》.

The two swords that had become emblematic of the Demonic White Sword ever since she saved the town from the Dragon King, shined with a light more furious than they ever had before.

“I have... a few **questions**... to ask this man...!”



What's going on in this alleyway?

Also, for anyone who missed it because published it in the middle of the night, I bought Volume I and shared the illustrations. The link's below.

[Volume 1 Illustrations](#)

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